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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

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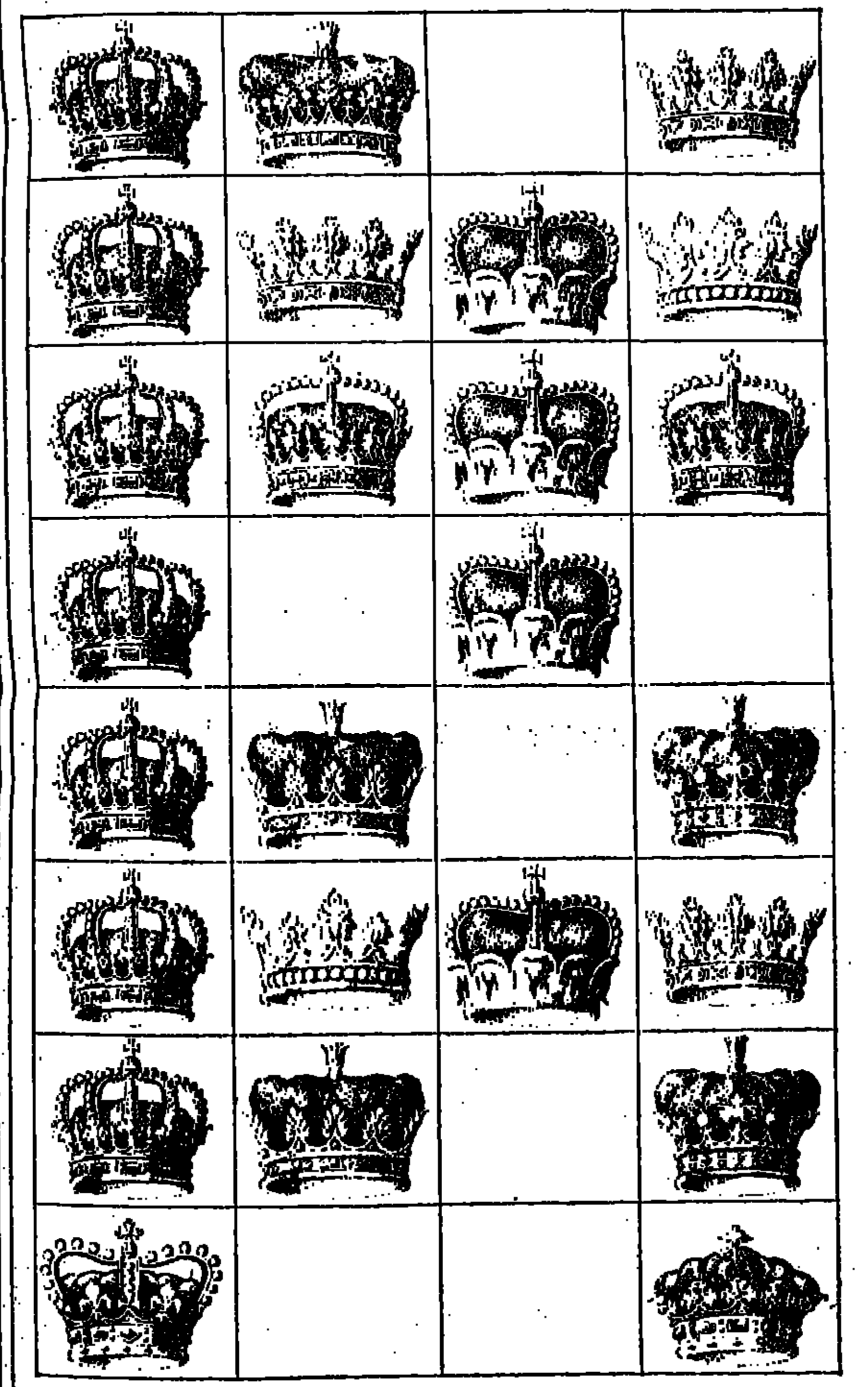

A catalogue for uneasy heads? This section of a table of crowns and coronets from the lavishly illustrated and comprehensive study Heraldry: Sources, Symbols and Meaning by Ottfried Neubecker, with contributions by J. P. Brooke-Little (288pp. Macdonald and Jane's. Paperback, £9.95, 0 354 04493 1) shows headware fit (from left to right) for a King, a Prince (Crown), Prince (Coronet) and a Duke in (from top to bottom) Spain, Italy, Germany, Russia, the Netherlands, Belgium up to 1795, Belgium since 1838 and England. A narrow cloth band was sufficient to distinguish the kings of the ancient Near East, but more recently the weight of a crown has been felt in the heaviness of its construction as well as its numinous value. During the Renaissance, arches, the symbol of sovereignty, and pearls became important in the hierarchy of crowns but since then many monarchs have had lighter substitute crowns made to ease the burden of their office.

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NOVEMBER 7 1980

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Fifty years on . . .

In the TLS *of November 6, 1930, A. C. Brock reviewed Bertrand Russell's* The Conquest of Happiness ;

. . . It is likely enough that Mr Russell will be the last true philosopher to talk of happiness, though he does so when he is not being particularly philosophical, and he relies on many of the discoveries of the psychologists. But he does not base his theories entirely on psychology, which is natural, since no psychologist would think that he knew by now enough to recommend any certain method of attaining happiness, or even to decide whether or not it is attainable. Thus the title of Mr Russell's book, "The Conquest of Happiness", is a huge assumption, which, of course, he thinks will be justified by putting his advice into practice. Certainly his advice usually seems very *good* ; and to many of the problems of modern life he suggests a solution which is, on the face of it, completely reasonable. It is right that we should decide what is reasonable behaviour . . . it takes a really clear mind like Mr Russell's to investigate it. But this *problem* is as nothing compared with the problem of how we may attain to reasonable behaviour. . . . Thus when Mr Russell tells us how we may avoid suffering from persecution mania by realizing that other people spend less time in thinking about us than we do ourselves, no doubt the advice is very wise in itself, but it is hard to tell how applicable it is. We may perhaps set aside another large assumption of Mr Russell's, that to act reasonably always leads to happiness and to act unreasonably always to unhappiness. Mr Russell himself touches on this point when speaking of those who get great happiness from silly pursuits like living on nuts; but he shelves the question, and advises us again only to take up reasonable pursuits. . . .

The life under the laurels

By Philip Larkin

ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN :
Tennyson : The Unquiet Heart
613pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press/Faber and Faber. £12.95.
0 19 812072 9

The reaction against Tennyson seems to have set in at his funeral. "A lovely day", wrote Henry James, "the Abbey looked beautiful, everyone was there, but something—I don't know what—of real impressiveness—was wanting". Burne-Jones was more explicit : "O but yesterday was so flat and flattening. I'll never forgive the Queen for not coming up to it, and I wish Gladstone had." True, among the bearers were one duke, two marquises, two earls, a baron and the American minister, but as Robert Bernard Martin points out in this biography of Tennyson "there was not a poet among them". One thinks of Hardy, borne by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, Barrie, Galsworthy, Gosse, Housman, Kipling, Shaw, and the heads of the two Oxford and Cambridge colleges of which he was an honorary fellow.

But perhaps the reaction had always been incipient. There was a curious hostility to Tennyson among his contemporaries, in contrast to—even because of—his staggering popularity. Carlyle said *The Princess* had "everything but common sense". Patmore would not change one of his own poems for fifty *Mauds*. Mrs Browning said the *Idylls* left her cold. "The real truth is", wrote Matthew Arnold, "that Tennyson, with all his temperament and artistic skill, is deficient in intellectual power". And Gosse pronounced, in no less conspicuous a place than the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1911, that "among all the English poets it is Tennyson who presents *the least* percentage of entirely unattractive poetry", a meiosis worthy of the early Amis ; while for Samuel Butler

> Blake was no good because he learnt Italian at 60 in order to study Dante, and Dante was no good because he was so fond of Virgil, and Virgil was no good because Tennyson ran him, and as for Tennyson—well, Tennyson goes without saying.

Not for Professor Martin he doesn't. In the preface to this substantial volume, the first major biography of its subject since Sir Charles Tennyson's account in 1949, he justifies its production by saying that it needs no justification: "almost no one seriously interested in the subject could fail to recognize that Tennyson is among the great English poets."

If our own age has not learned much else, it has at least come to a belated recognition of the greatness of the age of Victoria. Today the condescension of W. H. Auden and Harold Nicholson [sic] to Tennyson seems at least as outmoded as Tennyson seemed to them.

But does it ? We should remember that Nicolson at least was trying to *rehabilitate* Tennyson, to raise him from the fallen pantheon of nineteenth-century Nobodaddies by showing him to be an absurd and suffering human being much like ourselves. His Tennyson was a wild and rather silly young man of stormy ancestry who, after a youth of amatory and financial troubles, sailed into the haven of the most Victorian of marriages and the most Victorian of laureateships, fossilizing (to use Auden's word) into a picturesque and still rather silly old man who was, underneath, the same frightened and love-needing personality that had fled to the established virtues for protection against hostile circumstances. However, we take the point: Tennyson is to be turned right way up again, even though Professor Martin warns us that "to ignore the imperfections of a man is to patronise him, as if the whole truth of his character was not to be faced".

The portrait takes some time to emerge: Professor Martin is no impressionist, still less a cartoonist. His narrative inches forwards, sometimes by as little as two years to a chapter, with a wide-angled approach that while focused on Tennyson by no means ignores his family and friends. He handles a wealth of detail (much of which, inevitably, is familiar ground) with an easy unaffected style that occasionally rises to epigram ("the facility for happiness, like a good French accent, is usually learned early in life or not at all"). The myriad brush-strokes of his research are applied with well-documented deliberation, and the canvas is a large one—too large to be done justice by a short review. But when the picture is finished, it seems at first glance an assemblage of features: features that do not altogether coincide with the artist's original intention, and which show an obstinate tendency to remain features rather than a coherent portrait.

Perhaps the most prominent is that of heredity. Professor Martin's opening paragraph gives Tennyson's rejoinder ("not long before his death") to the Bishop of Ripon : "But there is heredity ; it counts for so much." Heredity was the epileptic fits of his father, coupled with alcoholic excess and laudanum that produced periods of frenzy ("he kept a large knife and a loaded gun in his room") alternating with protracted and expensive "cures" ; heredity was his elder brother Frederick quarrelling with their father to the point of threatened murder; it was his brother Charles becoming an opium addict, his brother Arthur an alcoholic, his brother Septimus frequenting institutions devoted to nervous diseases, his brother Edward's confinement to a lunatic asylum when nineteen, to stay there the rest of his life. In comparison, Tennyson's incessant smoking and bottles of port seem emblems of stability. But for the first twenty years of his adult life his family hung over him like an unpaid bill ; his mother had to be visited, but he could no more live alone with her than he could set up a house and family of his own, leading instead an almost nomadic existence in lodgings and rooms or at the houses of his friends.

Heredity in particular was a fear that he had inherited his father's epileptic tendency and that it would be transferred to any children he might beget. This is one of Professor Martin's original contentions: in 1836 Tennyson had met Emily Selwood, a bridesmaid at his brother Charles's wedding, and although the attraction does not seem to have been passionate on either side they were soon unofficially engaged. Tradition has it that a real engagement was "cruelly delayed and thwarted because of his lack of a profession" (*Chambers' Encyclopaedia*, 1973); Sir Charles Tennyson says that Emily's father grew increasingly unhappy at Tennyson's absence of steady employment and income, and in 1840 he forbade their continued correspondence, whereupon Emily saw and heard nothing of Tennyson for nearly ten years. The story is an odd one. Whatever Mr Selwood's role in the matter, there is a valedictory letter from Tennyson on January, 1840, in which he says "I fly thee for my good, perhaps for thine. . . . If thou knewest why I fly thee there is nothing thou would'st more wish for than that I should fly thee". Such dark hints, as Professor Martin claims, must refer to something more than poverty, or not having a job.

His own theory is that Tennyson about this time experienced a number of symptoms that might have pointed to epilepsy, and spent much of the 1840s attempting to cure himself. He draws attention to the passages inserted into the third edition of *The Princess* (1847) in which the Prince suffers from cataleptic or epileptic seizures inherited from his family; the hero of *Maud* is a prey to insane ravings and fits as his father was before him ; while *In Memoriam* "is in large part concerned with the meaning of trances, whether they are malign in nature or whether they are genuine pathways to suprasensory knowledge". "It can hardly be coincidental", he goes on,

> that these major poems, all three of which were begun in the 1830s or 1840s, are so saturated with references to the fear of fits and trances, followed by either recovery from them or the discovery that they are not malign in their effect.

Professor Martin is interesting on hydropaths ; in 1845 voluntary commitment to mental hospitals became illegal, and "water establishments" sprang up to cater for the large class of sufferers from "hypochondria" and other semi-psychosomatic ailments who still wanted treatment. The "water cure", based on the teaching of an Austrian layman named Preissnitz, involved the incessant application of water, both internally and externally, to purge the system of impurities, and to this Tennyson submitted himself a number of times in the middle 1840s. "The water cure would do him good if he gave it fair chances", wrote FitzGerald, "but he smokes, and drinks a bottle of wine a day. He looks however twice as well as he did a year ago." This was in early 1845.

Tennyson's last cure was at Dr Gully's at Malvern in 1843, after which he seems to have regarded himself as fully restored. "Dr Gully had no doubt made it clear . . . that his illness was not inherited epilepsy" but gout, the treatment for which was total abstinence. Gout however was much less dreadful than epilepsy, and in 1849 he renewed his suit to Miss Selwood. Not unnaturally, she was slow to entertain it a second time (opinions again differ why), but they were married in 1850 on June 15, *In Memoriam* having been published on the first of that month.

This theory, and it is only a theory, combats the long-held assumption that Tennyson did not marry because he could not afford it, but the Tennyson of 1849, however clean a bill of health he had received, was still a much better marital prospect than his counterpart of 1840, financially at any rate. Professor Martin devotes many passages to showing that Tennyson was always better off than he thought he was. In 1845 Peel offered him a pension of £200, which Tennyson accepted, thereby provoking Bulwer Lytton's vicious lines about "School-Miss Alfred", and Martin comments:

> In no serious way could Tennyson have thought he was poor once he had received the pension. If, as seems probable, he was no longer receiving any money from FitzGerald, he still had some £500-£700 annually, if one takes into account the income from his capital, earnings from his poetry, the pension, and £100 from his aunt Russell. It was equal to the benefices of only the most luxuriously provided clergymen of the day, and well beyond the dreams of most professional men.

This is no doubt true, but Tennyson had grown up in an atmosphere of financial insecurity : he had lost some of his own money and that of his family in the wood-working scheme of the madhouse-keeper Allen, and there was always the possibility that he would have to support his incapacitated brothers as well as his unmarried sisters (one of whom, Mary, was described as "something like what Alfred would be if he were a woman, and washed"). Given a timorous nature streaked with provincial hard-headedness, imagined poverty might account for reluctance to marry as effectively as the real thing.

These are Professor Martin's two principal contributions to Tennysonian biography. He has no revelations to offer on the sexual front : "There is not the slightest evidence that Tennyson ever had any sexual experience with another person until his marriage at the age of forty-one", a phenomenon he explains by the moral climate of the age and the poet's own lack of sexual drive. His dismissal of the homosexual element in Tennyson's feelings for Arthur Hallam is sensible enough, though he does not mention, as Christopher Ricks did, both Tennyson's and Hallam's love of Shakespeare's sonnets, and the "sort of sympathy with Hellenism" it expressed, at least according to their contemporary Jowett. In fact the character he draws is of someone demanding much from others, and not giving a great deal in return : Edward Lear, for instance, was amazed at the invalid Emily Tennyson's constant attention to her husband : "What labour for him !—and how little he seems to regard it ! " As Professor Martin says:

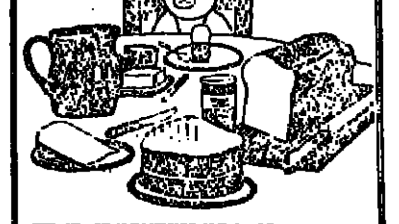
> There can be few poets in the language who more consistently and successfully wrote about friendship, and there were probably equally few with whom it was more difficult to maintain untroubled relations over a long period. As a friend he was a born sprinter rather than a long-distance runner.

FitzGerald was a case in point. A Cambridge friend, his affection for Tennyson and his admiration for his poems were strong and deep ; for some years, according to this account, he contributed £300 a year to Tennyson's income. But he grew increasingly out of sympathy with Tennyson's work, and impatient with his love of high society in fine houses, while Tennyson for his part became careless about answering FitzGerald's letters. "I sometimes wonder if People used to be so indifferent about seeing one another as all of us, so old friends, seem to be ! " FitzGerald remarked. At last in 1876 Tennyson and his son Hallam called on him unexpectedly, "and all the affection he had suppressed over the years when he had received no letters from Alfred now came to life in a joyous burst". They spent two days together in an ecstasy of reminiscence, and FitzGerald gave him his treasured portrait of Tennyson by Samuel Laurence for Emily Tennyson, but the reunion was not sustained. "Alfred himself never writes, nor indeed cares a halfpenny about one", was the lonely FitzGerald's final conclusion. It is one of the saddest stories in the book.

Such themes emerge only intermittently from a wealth of more familiar material—the growth of Tennyson's reputation, his houses, his relations with the Queen, his various publishers (Payne, Moxon's successor, fastened a pair of ass's ears to the portrait of Tennyson hanging in his office)—but they seem the most definite characteristics of the portrait Professor Martin draws. If Nicolson's Tennyson was endearingly silly, Martin's is cold and somewhat remote. He fails to bring out the gruff mingling of integrity and absurdity of so many of the anecdotes : the famous retort to Jowett ("If it comes to that, Master, the sherry you gave us at luncheon was beastly") is bisected with "answered Tennyson coldly". True, we do not know how Tennyson answered. But he is unlikely to have exhibited that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. The effect is rather like an edition of the poet's works with none of the dialect poems.

Professor Martin has tried to be fair to Tennyson, neither making fun of him nor seeing him, as his age did, as a figure out of Homer or even the Bible. The result is not a Great Victorian, but a personality at once dependent on others and inclined to neglect them, moody and sometimes panicky, close-fisted financially and emotionally and in every other way—except, of course, for the poems. In sum, there is a dimension lacking. It would be tempting to call this the life of a poet without his poems, if Professor Martin did not explicitly deny this in his preface. Nevertheless, it is the life of a poet without something, and perhaps poetry is the most convenient shorthand for it.

Essays by Divers Hands, the transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, New Series: Volume XLI, edited by Brian Fothergill (147pp. Boydell Press. £7.50. 0 85115 132 9), includes "The First Lord Acton" by Sir Harold Acton, "For the Centenary of John Masefield" by Roland Gant, "Military Experience in Literature" by Michael Howard, "Ambiguously ever after : Problematical endings in English Fiction" by David Lodge, "A Definition of a Snob" by Nigel Nicolson, "Chateaubriand and Proust; a Matter of affinities" by George D. Painter, "Intelligent Passion : a Quality of Jacobean Drama" by S. Gorley Putt, "Literature and Politics: The Case of Byron and Greece" by William St Clair, "The Death of the Hero : Poets at War" by Jon Stallworthy.



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Anarchists in the classroom

By Alan Ryan

PAUL AVRICH:

The Modern School Movement
Anarchism and Education in the United States

447pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £16.50 (paperback £7.10).
0 691 04669 7

In October 1909 the Spanish anarchist Francisco Ferrer was executed by government firing squad. The pretext was the charge of having organized and led the Barçelona insurrection of July that year, but it seems likely that the government was settling old scores and insuring itself against future difficulties. Ferrer had been suspected of organizing the unsuccessful attempts to assassinate Alfonso XIII in May 1905 and 1906, but he had never been convicted. That he was friendly with the would-be assassins and friendly to their cause is quite clear; that he was actually involved in the assassination attempts is very much less certain. But even if he had had nothing whatever to do with the events which led to his death, he would still have been an object of fear and loathing to the civil, military and ecclesiastical authorities. For the ruling passion of Ferrer's life was libertarian education, and his Escuela Moderna de Barcelona was a forum of "antigovernmental and antireligious ideas". The hierarchy denounced him as an agent of the devil, and denounced the school as a "nursery for atheism" and "worse than a brothel". Unsurprisingly, when the Barcelona rebellion led to wholesale repression by the authorities, Ferrer was among those done to death as an insurance against any epidemic of free-thinking.

The execution—Paul Avrich makes no bones about calling it "judicial murder"—outraged all shades of liberal opinion. In Britain, Arthur Conan Doyle was among the protestors along with Shaw, Wells and Kropotkin; in France, Maeterlinck, Jaurès and Anatole France. Associations to keep Ferrer's memory alive and to promote his educational goals sprang up from Brazil to Czechoslovakia. The most enduring of them all, however, was the Ferrer Association—after 1915 the Modern School Association—which began life in New York within a year of Ferrer's death, and faded away in the late 1950s. The Association ran a school in New York City and later in Stelton, New Jersey, which lasted in one shape or another until 1953; this school, and its progeny at Mohegan and Lakewood, were much the longest lived of all the Modern Schools which sprang up in memory of Ferrer, and it is they which are the nominal subject of Professor Avrich's immensely engaging book. The real subject is a good deal wider; although Avrich does indeed chronicle the ups and downs of the school at St Mark's Place, 12th Street, 107th Street and Stelton, his true achievement is to bring back to life the marvellously rich and vivid personalities associated with the educational experiment.

The outline of the story is simple; its details impossible to summarize. The Ferrer Association in New York began by establishing an adult centre where a journal was published, lectures were given, and revolutionaries of various hues hung out in the basement; the school followed a year later. It moved out of cramped quarters on East 12th Street to more suitable ones on East 107th Street a year after that. A combination of factors prompted a move into the New Jersey countryside in 1915; keeping the school going in New York caused constant financial difficulties, many anarchists felt it would be more likely to flourish if it was attached to a colony of sympathizers. Both arguments were reinforced by an event which led the first financial backer of the school to withdraw his support, and led, too, to a good deal of harassment from the police, and from *agents provocateurs*.

On Independence Day, 1914, three anarchists, and their unlucky lodger, had been blown to bits by a home-made bomb. The bomb was intended for John D. Rockefeller Jr, whose Colorado Fuel and Iron Company had behaved in a particularly brutal and disgusting fashion towards its striking employees. Avrich delivers a somewhat suspect punch in suggesting that Nelson Rockefeller's refusal to mediate at the Attica prison riot was much of a muchness with his father employing guards to murder the wives and children of striking miners; but it is all too easy to share the indignation of the three dynamiters at the thought that Rockefeller would again get away with murder. It is less easy to share their optimism about their chances of getting their bomb and their victim in the same place at the same time, and, in fact, the bomb that killed Caron, Hanson and Berg had been carried to Tarrytown and back before it blew up. The Ferrer Association was placed in an awkward position by the event. Few of its members thought revolutionary violence likely to achieve anything, and fewer still thought individual terror a plausible tactic. That the violence of employers and governments could be and would be met by violence from below was much more widely believed. Plainly the Association would stand by the dead men—though none was actually a member—but preferably without getting itself labelled as a terrorist conspiracy.

But Alden Freeman—otherwise "Nick Carter"—withdrew his financial support, which had previously paid most of the rent and most of the salaries; and non-revolutionary radicals like Upton Sinclair retired from the board of the Association. As they went, the spies, the journalists and the police came round; the adult centre in fact hung on in New York until the hysteria which broke loose after America's entry into the war, but in May 1915 the Day School moved out into one of the least lovely bits of the New Jersey countryside, some thirty miles south of New York.

What made Stelton unique was that it was a community centred on a school; it was not an experiment in communal living, and it was not in that sense a community in the tradition of New Harmony and other anarchist communities. Nor was it supposed to be self-supporting—almost everyone earned a living in New York, and almost all were skilled manual workers by occupation. One reason why Stelton was so long-lasting was that "the one thing that tied them together was the school; in other matters they largely went their own way". This is not to say that there were no troubles; trouble was pretty well continuous, and the detail of Avrich's account is the detail of arguments over the relative rights of parents and teachers, arguments over the merits of more or less concentration on academic and non-academic work, and anxieties about money. Libertarian education is labour intensive, and a working-class community is rarely flush with cash.

The colony at Mohegan—a very much prettier lakeside site, laid out by Lewis Mumford—drew on many of the same people, and on many of the same ideas. Avrich gives it rather less attention, partly because most of the key figures went there after first making their mark in New York or Stelton, and partly because the school gradually turned into an ordinary progressive school rather than anything distinctively libertarian. The colonists were, of course, addicted to a wide range of strange ideas. Lydia Landau, for example, thought a starchy diet the root of all evil, and commemorated the German invasion of Poland with the little jingle: "The soldiers march, Because of starch." Time, tiredness and the Second World War pretty well did for Stelton; the same causes, and quarrels between communists and anti-communists, killed off Mohegan as a libertarian colony, the final nails in its coffin being provided by the prosperity which turned it into a middle-class commuter suburb. Why, says one survivor of the old days, "their houses are all decorated at Christmas. When I saw a man reading *The Daily News*, I knew the colony was finished".

Avrich draws no conclusions about the Modern School Movement. Although it is evident that he feels a great affection for everyone connected with the schools, he is very careful not to ascribe their virtues to the education they got. He notes that he is not alone in thinking former pupils more lively, more imaginative and more interesting than the average, but he is quick to say that this is no more than a personal impression. Again, he does not suggest that the movement had any great impact on American education. It is true that many of the ideas of the Ferrer Association are more or less commonplace now, the concentration on the child as an individual in his or her own right, the techniques of teaching by getting the child engaged in a "project", the hope of combining academic and practical training, for example. But none of this shows that the Modern Schools influenced practice elsewhere. In any case, Avrich is very doubtful about the coherence of anarchist educational theory, and the subjects of this book certainly reached nothing like unanimity on most important issues. They were notably divided on the question whether the school should propagandize in favour of anarchism, splitting as one would expect on the issue of whether all propaganda is propaganda, and anarchist propaganda therefore an instance of repressively imposing libertarian convictions or whether that sort of propaganda was minimal self-defence.

The point of Avrich's book, however, and the real success of his story, is to rescue from oblivion a host of interesting characters at a particularly interesting time. Much of his evidence is anecdotal—he has interviewed the children of many of the key figures, and he has also interviewed a good many unrepentant octogenarians whose vigours suggests that a healthy hatred of authority is healthy indeed—and the book fairly bubbles with good stories. Two of the cast stand out especially vividly—Hippolyte Havel and Sadakichi Hartman, an acquaintance with whom would have been emotionally enriching and financially impoverishing in about equal proportions.

Havel was Bohemian by birth and bohemian by nature—though he said he was a native-born American of Cro-Magnon origin when evading deportation during the Red Scare.

A detail from a 1917 cover design by Rockwell Kent, which became the emblem of the Modern School Association of North America.

Before he ever got to America he had been locked up in an asylum by the Austrian government; he was sprung by no less a figure than Krafft-Ebing, who was not moved by the authorities' argument that only a madman disbelieved in government. "He knows more psychology than I do, and he is saner than any of us", said Krafft-Ebing; sadly enough, when Havel died in 1950, it was in an American madhouse. In his heyday, in the first two decades of this century, he edited revolutionary journals, lectured at the Ferrer Centre, and cooked like an angel at Polly's Restaurant in Greenwich Village—the service left something to be desired, as he was prone to address his guests as "bourgeois pigs" while feeding them. Not all of them lost in the exchange of abuse; "parlor revolutionary", he yelled at John Reed; "kitchen revolutionary" came the immediate reply. On one occasion he was hauled into court for publicly urinating on lower Fifth Avenue; when the judge inquired why he couldn't have relieved himself less obtrusively in a side street, Havel was outraged. "You mean I should do it where the poor people live? No, no, I refuse to do it there, I protest." He spent too much energy on life ever to produce the great book his friends hoped for, and his last years were grim.

Sadakichi Hartman was his only rival in talent and flamboyance. "Presumably sired by Mephistopheles out of Madame Butterfly", said John Barrymore, who knew him in Hollywood in the 1920s; but Hartman was a talent out of his time. He gave the first psychedelic light show in 1897, a "perfume concert" in 1902, wrote the first English Haiku, was much admired by Pound, and became one of the first serious critics of photography as an art form. He was irresistible to women—"three parts genius and one part devil", sighed one abandoned wife, "and I was in love with all four parts"—to whom he gave lessons in body language at the Ferrer Center. He found the anarchist milieu to his taste though he had no intense or lasting interest in anarchist doctrine; his move to Hollywood brought neither fame nor fortune—"the movies means 'gimme some dough'" quipped W. C. Fields—and when Hartman died in the middle of the Second World War he was being pestered by the FBI and Californian patriots who thought he was passing messages to the aircraft of the country he had left way back in the previous century.

The steadying influences throughout are Leonard Abbott, Harry Kelly, and Joseph Cohen, all of them born in the 1870s, all dying in the same year, 1953. It was they who supplied much of the organizational energy of the associations between 1910 and 1930. Two couples, Elizabeth and Alexis Ferm, and Jim and Nellie Dick, provided most of the day-to-day work of teaching and managing the schools themselves. Indeed the ups and downs of the school at Stelton is the same story as that of the arrivals and departures of these four. But all sorts of people came and went. Will Durant, for instance, was the chief teacher at 12th Street and 107th Street for a year. It was there that he met his Ariel. The exuberant fourteen-year-old Ida Kaufman saw Will romping with his students in Central Park and bullied her mother into sending her to the Modern School. The shy Durant, twice her age, and just released from the seminary, fell madly in love, did the decent thing, and resigned to marry his pupil. The story of their wedding is familiar—Ida dashing into City Hall on roller skates, her stockings shredded from a tumble en route, the judge sternly instructing Durant not to touch his wife before her sixteenth birthday—but it is well retold.

Although Avrich is agnostic about the success and failure of the Ferrer Association, the bustle of his pages induces an intense nostalgia for those far off days. You could paint with Robert Henri and Man Ray, argue with Jack London and Upton Sinclair, or just hang out with a crowd composed of middle-class native Americans in revolt against their philistine backgrounds and an immigrant population from everywhere between Cork and the Urals. It was a world which America's entry into the First World War and the unequivocal success of the Soviet Union combined to destroy; the lines between liberals and revolutionaries and between communists and anarchists hardened into battle positions, and a certain innocence went out of the world. Professor Avrich tells his story artlessly, and not always very tidily—but it has the freshness and disorderliness of real life, and we are much in his debt.

The Missionary Position

Since those first days it has been like this with Tellus,
That the stiff sky is always on the point of breaking
And intervention, above the roof of a shearer's hut
Or in a shower of gold, is what we may expect
Of such pent-up presences. Then there comes that
Augustinian fairness which gives us metaphors
Appropriate to our condition. Upon the roads
After a drenching resurrection, or eating in darkness,
The abandoned followers are shown a sign so
Comforting it sets as a star upon their flag.
A dog recognizes its master by a tone of tail,
The pools fill up with abstractions of the Spring.
The Little Soul itself, natured and then flung upon
The world, revisits cabins of its gloom, kiosks
Where marvellous things matured. Among the queueing gods
Long Service Veterans sigh for ordinariness,
To bring the brilliant seed of the future down
To an average hearth, there among the rugs and rules
Of generations, removed from graphs of passion,
Serve their chosen companionship face to face,
The decency and boredom of diurnal love.

Peter Porter

Axel and after

By Julian Symons

EDMUND WILSON:

The Thirties
From Notebooks and Diaries of the Period

Edited by Leon Edel

753pp. Macmillan. £12.50.
0 333 21211 8

In a personal and a literary sense the Thirties was a crucial decade in Edmund Wilson's life. In May 1930, at the age of thirty-five he made his second marriage, to Margaret Canby, a woman (according to Leon Edel) of "high breeding and elegance", unintellectual but a steady companion in the regular hard drinking of Wilson's adult life. A little more than two years later she slipped down a steep flight of steps at a cocktail party in Santa Barbara, fractured her skull and died. Although their marriage had been marked by frequent quarrels, he dreamed about her for years afterwards, and her death was the most terrible thing that happened to him. Wilson was a persistent amorist, but after Margaret's death he had no settled relationship until his "strained and stormy" (Mr Edel again) marriage in 1938 to Mary McCarthy.

The decade was also one of great literary achievement. The beginning of it saw the publication of *Axel's Castle*, the first book to make Wilson widely known. By the end of it he had published the essays in *The Triple Thinkers*, including the revolutionary view of *The Turn of the Screw*, and the major work *To The Finland Station*, as well as the long reviews and short essays on almost every interesting writer of the period which he contributed to *The New Republic*. Add to these the essays in *The Wound and the Bow*, published in 1941, particularly those on Dickens and Kipling, and you have the finest and most influential of Edmund Wilson's *literary and social* criticism. He died before giving the text of the present volume its final polish in the way of correction and explanation, but it may be the more valuable for that. In any case these notes put down at the time have a triple interest, as a revelation of character, as showing Wilson's unending curiosity and fine powers of observation, and above all as a picture of an intellectual struggling to come to terms with his time.

The lesser, that is the personal, matters first. Wilson kept his journals in part to set down material later to be used in articles or books (in this volume particularly the pieces he wrote on life in the Depression and about his visit to the Soviet Union), but this book and the companion one dealing with the Twenties show what a determinedly analytical pen he brought to matters that most people would describe with emotion, or perhaps would feel themselves unable to describe at all. Here are two views of Margaret round about the time of their marriage:

> Her high and nobly modeled brow and temples were no longer merely Anglo-Saxon, but showed the modeling of a high civilization—and all the lower part of her face had a roundness and softness which responded, which vibrated, as I had never seen it do, to her feelings and thoughts.
>
> She read . . . with her grave attentive gaze, her largish sober head on one side, her little feet pulled up underneath her full thighs on the staled (or sapped) brown-yellow of the wicker chair, smoking a cigarette, and shifting the brown-and-yellow-jacketed book to the wicker arm, and bracing her head with her arm.

The detachment might be that of a painter with his subject, and the same quality is shown in the thirty pages of recollections he put down not long after her death, surprisingly considered by Mr Edel to be reminiscent of passages in Proust or of Molly Bloom's soliloquy. "You're a cold fishy leprous person, Bunny Wilson", Margaret said once, and Edmund Wilson puts down this verdict without disagreement, yet it is almost as though the words, along with others like "caddish" or "bounderish", somehow exorcise the facts by being written. Mr Edel mentions the sexual frankness of this fragment about their relationship, but in the context it seems natural enough. This diarist is frank, but not in Boswell's way, for he distances himself from what his pen is putting down, as though he were writing about somebody else. Human beings are described as if they were characters in a novel, and this is so even at moments of tenderness, when he is writing of Margaret's "cunning little 'sex appeal' shoe" or her "cunning little thick body" or "how sweet and pretty and darling she had been, so soft and cunning". The word is in frequent use, applied to lamps, children and sandpipers, yet it seems somehow to convey formality rather than intimacy. The sexual passages relating to Margaret have exactly the same examining character of those that occur later in the book, some of which have an unintended comic quality, like the account of the woman he spanked because she wanted to be beaten, although "this spanking made my hands sore", or "I felt her up with my fingers . . . and then the salmon fish cakes at dinner made me think tenderly of her".

Was Bunny Wilson cold, fishy and leprous, or at least "caddish" and at times brutal, in personal relationships? If so, this was a price those who knew him had to pay, and that perhaps in a sense he paid too, for his endless intellectual and factual curiosity, the desire to know and understand, and afterwards to write down. This was manifested during the 1930s by his learning Russian before going to the Soviet Union, as later he acquired half a dozen languages that served as socio-literary tools. Made manifest, too, in his visits during the hardest days of the Depression to the mountain people of Kentucky, to see the worst of Detroit, and look at the miseries of West Virginia's miners. What he had seen he described, but always from a distance, avoiding the first person, and avoiding also the least expression of emotion. He is sometimes ironic, but never indignant. The mountain people of Kentucky "are really like nothing human". They have $3 a week to support a family of five, live solely on meal, meat and molasses, and so suffer from pellagra. They are so ignorant that the nearest they get to writing is to touch one finger to the end of the pencil with which they should sign their names. He goes with the county agent to visit a family, an old man with four children. They live in "a primitive backwoods log cabin, with no windows and crude scale-like shingles on the roof, such as the earliest poorest settlers must have built". The family have very little food, the mother is dead, one of the children is crippled. "A boy threw a rock at him when he was small and hurt his back". This deadpan description of misery ends with the agent expressing doubt about a local story that the children eat their fingers from hunger. "I couldn't see any sign of it", the agent says. "I tried to make the little girl come out from behind the stove".

The extent to which Wilson aligned himself with the American Communist Party in the early 1930s is emphasized by the collection of articles—including the one about the mountain people—which he published between covers in 1932 as *The American Jitters* (in Britain *Devil Take the Hindmost*). When William Z. Foster, the Party boss, is under examination by the House Committee to investigate Communism, three pages of his speech are given verbatim, a piece on "Communists and Cops" shows the police beating up the crowds who are "all alike looking undersized, undernourished, dingy-featured, drearily dressed", and in "The Case of the Author", omitted when the book was reprinted in the late 1950s, Wilson says that "I offer myself as a specimen of the current American bourgeoisie", and supports the idea of a Communist dictatorship, "fairly and sensibly run as Russia is now run". One of the most interesting aspects of the journals is that they show the transformation of the aesthete who wrote *Axel's Castle* into the man who voted the Communist ticket in the 1932 election, and thought in the same year that "So far as I can see Karl Marx's predictions are in process of coming true". Such ideas were shaken rather than destroyed by his visit to the Soviet Union in 1935. The notes record that "everybody says" people were much better off than they had been a few years ago, a Jewish woman says "everything beautiful, had heard of no discontent", and a horrific experience in hospital does not deter the traveller. Much of the notebook material was embodied in *Travels in Two Democracies* (the second was the United States), which appeared in 1936, and although by 1940 Wilson was a fervent isolationist in relation to the Second World War he was still saying many years later that this was "in certain ways, the most liberal period ever known in Soviet Russia". There existed ample evidence at the time, like Max Eastman's *Artists in Uniform*, to show that this was not the case.

Of course many other writers were deceived, or deceived themselves, in the 1930s about the nature of the Soviet Union, but Wilson's attitude is deplorable particularly because it was combined with contemptuous distrust of Roosevelt and the New Deal reforms at home. Evidence for this can be found in articles of the time, like the references in "Inaugural Parade" (1932) to the new President's "smug public smile", his unctuousness and pulpit vagueness, as well as in journal references which quote what Roosevelt's opponents said about the President's impracticality (the wife of the Governor of Pennsylvania "didn't know whether Franklin Roosevelt was quite right in his head") and the impending collapse of the NRA. Wilson also regrets on his own account a "fairyish" emphasis which he found in the famous radio fireside chats. Although he welcomed the President's landslide re-election in 1936, he still felt that "the popular enthusiasm had more warmth and force" than the man himself.

The change in his feelings during the decade had its effect on *To The Finland Station*. As early as 1932 he had been struck by the idea that "nobody had ever presented in intelligible human terms the development of Marxism" and had conceived "a narrative which would quite get away from the pedantic frame of theory". The book he finally produced eight years later, learning German and Russian to help with the research, remains a marvellously readable account of revolutionary personalities from the 1790s onwards, but the idealism with which he had begun research had almost vanished during the years in which near-Marxist Wilson turned into isolationist Wilson. The strain of completing the book must have been great, and in the result history is conceived almost wholly as personal drama, in which Lenin the Great Headmaster and Trotsky the Young Eagle play parts on a stage made ready for them by Karl Marx Poet of Commodities and the Young Man from Manchester, Friedrich Engels (the labels come from the chapter headings). The "pedantic frame of theory" is escaped only by turning the Russian Revolution into a series of arbitrarily chosen dramatic scenes. Lenin's arrival at the Finland station was not, after all, the culminating point of the Revolution, but merely a convenient moment at which to bring the drama to an end.

The book, Wilson noted, took him "far afield of what I thought was my prime objective: a work of fiction made out of the materials that I had been compiling in these notebooks". That work of fiction was never completed, and his creative urge was expressed in criticism, and in the dramatic treatment of reality. Some of it went into the *Finland Station* and some, more effectively, into his autobiographical work and his marvellous treatment of American history in *Patriotic Gore*. The rest spilled over into the essays and articles, mostly about recent books and writers, that he produced with undiminished zest and perceptiveness until about the middle of the 1950s. It may be, as Angus Wilson has said, that some of his theories about Dickens and Kipling cannot be fully justified, but at the time they were revelations to many beside Edmund's namesake. The best of Edmund Wilson went into those dozens of critical and expository pieces that are almost invariably shrewd and always generous. It is no surprise to find him appreciative of friends like Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald and Dos Passos, but who would have expected him to attempt the rehabilitation of James Branch Cabell or to admire the cut-glass prose of Elinor Wylie? Or, crossing the Atlantic, to write as well as anybody has done about Evelyn Waugh and Kingsley Amis? There are moments of imperception, like his cavalier dismissal of Anthony Powell, but they occur late in the day, when critic Wilson was almost lost behind the features of Great Panjandrum Wilson.

It was as the Great Panjandrum that he ended his days, the figure on the beach at Wellfleet observed with malice and a touch of sentiment in a memoir by Alfred Kazin. Wearing a stained old panama hat, a long white dress shirt, "brown Bermuda shorts that bulged with his capacious middle" and carrying a gold-topped cane, he settled down uncomfortably on the sand and talked. The talk must have been rather like that of one of those immensely knowledgeable but finally tedious old men in an early Huxley novel. "The formality of sentence structure even on the beach, like the aloofness of his manners even when you were drinking and gossiping with him in his own house, was like nothing any of us would ever see again." He became in his last years a Johnsonian "character", capable still of warmth and geniality especially towards admirers, but in many things merely crotchety. He must have known that his approach to literature, which in the major essays looked always at the interrelation between an author's life and his work, was increasingly rejected, and that many academics explained to their classes that (I quote Mr Kazin) Edmund Wilson was "not really a critic at all". A critic so influential for his time—a time that ranged for roughly thirty years on from the middle 1920s—was bound to suffer such a reversal of fortune: but his admirers, looking back at the totality of his achievement, will be happy to be called old-fashioned.

"Henry Geldzahler with painting of him by David Hockney", by Cecil Beaton. This photograph forms part of a large collection of "Photographic Images and Other Material from the Beaton Studio" to be sold at Sotheby Parke Bernet Inc, New York, on Tuesday November 18. The collection includes a number of portraits of Beaton, by himself and others, and some snapshot albums, each containing several hundred photographs, which he compiled.

A "definitive edition" of Mussolini's writings and speeches in thirteen volumes was published in his own lifetime by Hoepli of Milan, but, as well as being very incomplete, was politically censored. It was superseded in 1951-63 by a far better and larger edition in thirty-six volumes, edited by Edoardo and Duilio Susmel, and published by La Fenice of Florence. In recent years much more material has become available, and six out of a projected eight more volumes have now appeared under the imprint of Giovanni Volpe in Rome, all in the same style and format as the La Fenice edition. The new volumes mostly contain letters, but also some *Scritti riservati* of considerable interest. They are published as volumes 37-42 of the *Opera Omnia*. The eight new volumes were originally advertised as costing 120,000 lire to foreign buyers, or 325,000 lire for the whole set of forty-four volumes.

Denis Mack Smith

Dust behind the dream

By John Lucas

E. L. DOCTOROW :
Loon Lake
258pp. Macmillan. £6.95.
0 333 30641 4

The manner of *Loon Lake* is complex, but the matter is comparatively simple. For the most part set in the 1930s, its dual narrative follows two American working-class boys as they make their ways to manhood and, by the kind of chance that has an air of inevitability about it, to Loon Lake itself, an enormous private estate which is owned by a crooked wealthy capitalist boss, F. W. Bennett, and which symbolizes nature as mad, aggressive, selfish. The harder of the two boys, Joe Korzeniowski, or Joe of Paterson, is a self-centred tough, for whom survival means looking after number one. His parents have been beaten down by the drudgery of their lives and the urban squalor of their surroundings. Joe is a Huck without conscience. Doctorow repeatedly shifts Joe's narrative between the first and third persons, presumably to imply his lack of a sure selfhood, or perhaps rather to show his ability to watch himself acting out various roles, none of which he can fully identify with. After an adolescence of various odd jobs, Joe finds himself at Loon Lake. He meets there Warren Penfield, another poor boy, son of exploited miners, a poet manqué who is now a drink-sodden failure and who has given up his vow to write about, and so at least partly atone for, the misery of his parents' lives. (Bennett's empire is responsible for most of that misery.)

Penfield is killed in Bennett's wife's private aeroplane, while Joe ends up as Bennett's natural successor, destroyed in a different sense. By the end of the book he is Deputy Director of the CIA, is Chairman and Chief Operating Officer of the Bennett Foundation, and is master of Loon Lake. In the course of getting there he has lost whatever soul he had.

Loon Lake is an intensely ambitious novel. Like *The Book of Daniel* and *Ragtime* it investigates or penetrates moments of American history in order to account for the failure, indeed the impossibility, of the American dream. I do not see how one can read it without being reminded of *The Great Gatsby* and, even more perhaps, *The Diamond As Big As The Ritz*. Loon Lake, with its vast, meretricious glitter, is so reminiscent of Scott Fitzgerald's tale that it is possible that Doctorow intends to expand the implications of that wonderful fable. Which is to imply a criticism. For *Loon Lake* suffers from the degree of its contrivance. This is not chiefly a problem of its narrative method, no matter how fussy that may appear as it works backwards and forwards and cross-cuts between Joe and Warren. The main difficulty is that the novel feels as if it has been written to a thesis, and a thesis that takes for granted a whole number of films, novels and poems, which could almost be thought to amount to a tradition: the exploration of or insistence on the overwhelming reality of that foul dust which Nick Carraway saw floating in the wake of Gatsby's dream.

What brings Joe to Loon Lake is a vision startlingly akin to the heart of Daniel Hoffman's strange and compelling poem, "The City of Satisfactions", which may well be another starting point for Doctorow's novel. Miles from anywhere, Joe stumbles on a private branch line of a railway. A train comes along the track.

> I saw a porter in a white jacket serving drinks to three men sitting at a table. I saw dark wood panelling, a lamp with a fringed shade, and shelves of books in leather bindings. Then two women sitting talking at a group of wing chairs that looked textured, as if needlepointed. Then a bright bedroom with frosted-glass wall lamps and a canopied bed and standing naked in front of a mirror was a blonde girl and she was holding up for her examination a white dress on a hanger.

Joe refers to this vision as one of "incandescent splendor" which "had left me more alone and terrified than I knew it was possible to be". The incandescent spendour, the green light at the end of the dock, are symbols of that grail which, once held, turns to base metal. (But the symbol is surely far better realized in *The Great Gatsby*.)

The girl Joe has glimpsed is a gangster's moll, called Clara. The gangster is in the employ of Bennett, and the girl is Bennett's part-time mistress. Money buys anything. Penfield ineffectually loves Clara but it's Joe who escapes with her from Loon Lake, into a world of sleazy rooming houses and eventually into humdrum work. He is soon on the road again, however, this time with a girl called Sandy.

Joe and Sandy follow the Oakie trail towards California, but Joe never makes it. Instead, he abandons Sandy and heads back to Loon Lake. The immediate reason for this is that *as he and the girl wait on a station for a train to take them to California an express flashes through and they glimpse aboard it a beautiful woman. A film-star,* Sandy tells him, but Joe "had thought it was Clara. I laughed at myself and lit a cigarette, but long afterward something remained of the moment and located itself in my chest, some widening sense of loss, some heartsunk awareness of the value I once placed on myself." The irony is obvious enough; and Joe's last chance of freeing himself from the lure of the grail has now gone. However far you travel, you can't escape the foul dust of the American dream.

It's for this reason, I imagine, that the novel's narratives move backwards and forwards, connect and disconnect, feature now Joe and now Warren and sometimes Doctorow himself; and also why there is so much by way of echo, parallel, prolepsis. Fresh starts prove to be false; again and again the novel returns upon itself. Thus Bennett tells Joe to "get into the place that's your nature . . . and live to the fullness of it, become what you are . . .". Late in the novel, but chronologically much earlier and on the other side of the world, Warren comes across a master of Zen who lives "totally to the fullness of his being each and every moment of his existence". In both cases, the existential commitment allows no room for ordinary moral considerations. Simply the things they are shall make them live. Bennett's nature is to exploit and destroy others, and through his contact with the Master, Warren "realized the true dereliction of the planet and realized anew that convictions of friendship, love, the assumption of culture, the certainty of calendars were fragile constructs of the imagination . . .".

In *Loon Lake* love is endlessly betrayed, or is reduced to a cash-transaction. This is starkly imaged in the death of the fat woman at the circus where the young Joe works, killed by the men who pay to stand in line and sexually abuse her. After Joe has abandoned her and returned to Loon Lake, "I tried to compose my terrible shame into something I could deal with, I tried to comprehend the weird sick brokenness I felt, the sense of irreparable damage I had done to myself, the catastrophic discomposure of everything but the small light in my mind."

That passage, with its suggested testifying to breakdown, to psychic and moral loss, is both the novel's thesis and the clue to what *is* wrong with it. Because for all its cleverness, and the occasional brilliantly imagined scene, *Loon Lake* is finally too insistent, too hectoring, too much in love with its own diagnosis of cultural chaos. In a word, it is too adjectival. Doctorow repeatedly reaches for such words as "terrible", "irreparable", "catastrophic", words which wouldn't need to make an appearance if he were able to imagine the lives of the novel's characters, and the America of the 1930s. He is especially weak at describing the work that goes on in the car factory; yet communicating a sense of the relentless drudgery of such life is presumably essential to the novel. Altogether, there is too much thesis about *Loon Lake* and too little life.

Alan Brown's A Wind up the Willow, first published in a "New Writing and Writers" anthology in 1978 and now reissued by John Calder (95pp. £5.95. 0 7145 3806 6), is a tale of small town gangsters in Britain which subverts, through sadism and black humour, Kenneth Grahame's animal classic.

The temperate observer

By Patricia Craig

SEAN O'FAOLAIN :
Collected Stories
Volume 1
445pp. Constable. £8.50.
0 09 463920 5

"Puritan Ireland's dead and gone,/ A myth of O'Connor and O'Faolain." In "The Fleadh at Mullingar" John Montague uses as a refrain this humorous tribute to two short-story writers whose objective, initially at least, was to document the social realities of Irish life, priests, politics and all, at a time of particular bitterness and disruption. Behind the Montague couplet, of course, are Yeats's lines about romantic Ireland, dead and gone in 1913 when that poem was written, but briefly resurrected during the revolutionary period between 1916 and 1922, before a civil war wiped it out for ever. "Much Irish literature since 1922 has been of an uncompromising scepticism . . .". Sean O'Faolain noted in his book *The Irish*, and the comment applies to his own stories. Like Frank O'Connor, whose *Guests of the Nation* appeared in 1931, the young O'Faolain was able to consider the republican episode, and his own part in it, with salutary disenchantment.

It did, none the less, provide a strong theme for his earliest stories (published in 1932 in *Midsummer Night Madness* and now reissued in the collected edition along with everything from the two succeeding volumes). Before the Truce of 1921, Irish volunteers were dispersed throughout the countryside in small columns, living from hand to mouth, going to ground in dug-outs in the hills or finding sanctuary with sympathetic hill-farmers, emerging only to carry out the prescribed acts of guerrilla warfare. "A life of hardship, strain and danger, and of glorious activity, faith and hope", wrote Dorothy Macardle, the official historian of this phase in Irish nationalism; only the first half of her definition would have made sense to the scrupulous realist. From the start, O'Faolain's literary manner was temperate and discerning.

Take "Midsummer Night Madness", for example, with its delicate emotional balance between the broken-down old Anglo-Irish libertine, Henn, and the belligerent young republican Stevey Long. The latter has commandeered and moved into the former's country mansion, and confrontations between the two are recorded dispassionately by the narrator, another young freedom-fighter sent out from Cork to inquire into the non-activity of Long's battalion. The point is that Henn, whether or not he belongs to a class "that had battened for too long on our poor people", is by no means despicable, and even attains a kind of dignity in the end as as he shuffles off with his tinker bride (an alliance that may or may not augur well for the future of the country). There is no glory in active patriotism, as envisaged by O'Faolain, only a perpetual state of high nervous tension, misery and discomfort: "There was barely room for the three to lie in this dark, damp tomb, but as Kerry implored them to go into it at once, they lay down there, shoulder to shoulder, peering up and out all day long at the grey spears of the falling rain."

In the early stories there is often a narrator or a figure who seems to stand in for the author, but usually this character is as self-effacing as Anthony Powell's Nick Jenkins. Only in "The Small Lady" are his feelings given any prominence in the plot, and this is because he—a devout lad—has just been seduced, in a monastery, of all places; seduced, moreover, by an Anglo-Irish "she-spy" brought into the hills to face execution. Indeed, this situation contains enough potential emotional force to generate disorder in the writing: an outcome averted, however, by O'Faolain's characteristic detachment. It is true that every serious Irish writer is to some extent a social critic, but O'Faolain seems less anxious than most to put forward a dogmatic point of view. As far as possible, he withholds judgment.

This makes him less a satirist than an observer—one of unusually acute and wide-ranging powers. The closest he gets to the satirical mode is in "Sullivan's Trousers", a story about the follies arising from purblind insularity, which is funny but not, I think, as trenchant as the author intended. "A Broken World", from the same collection (*A Purse of Coppers*, 1937) provides a more subtle and satisfactory analysis of the new Free State's economic troubles, with the old social system discredited, and nothing adequate to replace it. It also involves a typical O'Faolain grouping of three male speakers: priest, peasant and author, garrulous, slow-witted and intent respectively. Priest, doctor and bank clerk, and priest, teacher and storyteller are other vers this representative Irish trio.

Sympathy, in O'Faolain's s is often focused where it's leas pected. "The Man Who lov Sin", for instance, which see times as if it might turn in frolic on the lines of "The L of Cockaigne" ("And comic the nuns anon/Each monk t him one"), plays on the re natural approval of high spirits overturns our assumptions in final pages when we learn that sour and pompous curate ha come benevolent, and the bustious monk ascetic. "Theresa" (the excellent story from the 1947 collection) innocence is located not in histrionic young novice with delusions of sainthood but in crotchety, greedy old Innocence, integrity—these particular values in an environme which fosters piety along with inverse, hypocrisy. O'Faolain characters are lumbered with flaws of temperament and suffer from many deficiencies for which they cannot be held accountable. The most they can hope for is the sudden moment of illumination—however complex or distressing in consequences may be.

Decay, destruction, poverty, gloom, the sodden landscape, the rash act, the drink, the backward view, provincial lassitude, inexhaustible talk and speculation: these are the common properties of Irish fiction, which O'Faolain reuses and rearranges with endless inventiveness. His narrative method is, on the whole, traditional; early twentieth-century experiments with form and structure in the short story seem to have passed him by. His writing is by turns austere and exuberant: he has perfected a plain, lucid and vigorous style, devoid of tricks and mannerisms. He does not aim for immediacy so much as timelessness. Like Chekhov, he makes palpable a sense of life going on in the background: fish-wives crying their wares in the lanes of Cork; the pious thronging the city churches. At an early stage he showed that political passions were best treated unemotionally. He finds poetic lushness—the palpitating soul—so inappropriately co-existing with the hard head—a suspect quality, and properly eschews it. Reading this first volume of the *Collected Stories* makes us understand why his influence on the Irish story has been so profound, and reinforces our awareness of what he has achieved: a wide and compassionate view of modern Irish life, authentic in feeling and rich in detail.

Agents of myth

By Carol Rumens

EMMA TENNANT :
Alice fell
124pp. Cape. £5.50.
0 224 01872 8

Large, faded country houses and hotels form an important part of the imaginative terrain of Emma Tennant. They seem to provide a metaphor both for the individual human consciousness and for historical change, particularly as it is played out between the generations. This new novel revolves around just such a house, set vaguely among "the Downs" and occupied by its owner, the Old Man, and by the Paxton family and their child Alice.

The fictional method, familiar to readers of Tennant, is not entirely allegorical, though allegory plays a major part and the "real" world is presented at a remove, stylized and symbolistrewn. As *Alice fell* unwinds in its chapterless sections it suggests a medieval tapestry, or perhaps a more ancient frieze depicting godlike characters, larger and simpler than life. The difficulty is that by stylizing the Paxton household and treating the members as agents of myth (Alice herself is, of course, Persephone) Ms Tennant sacrifices the novelist's most effective means of holding the reader's attention—the sense of chance exercising itself within a life. As archetypes, her characters have a limited choice of actions. With the exception of Alice, they scarcely develop over the twenty or so years of the narrative: the Old Man, though he finally dies, is already old when the novel begins and does not noticeably become more senile; Ella, daughter of the midwife who delivers baby Alice, seems to retain her youthful life-force to the end. It is uncertain whether this kind of writing ultimately gains over a more traditional telling of the family saga, a form already well adapted, at its best, to showing social and historical change manifested at a personal level.

Within their allegorical limits, however, the characters and the family structure are credible. There is the Old Man, paradoxically both remote from, yet intuitively in touch with, the new age that dawns with Alice's birth (at the time of the Suez crisis). Mr Paxton potters convincingly on the domestic periphery traditionally occupied by fathers. Mrs Paxton, alias Ceres, is a monumentally placid figure who dominates first the kitchen then the entire house as she embarks on a Herculean spring-cleaning (a needlessly deliberate analogy to the cleansing of the Augean stables that involves the diversion of a river into the house).

At times, a delicate comic sense takes over, as when Mrs Paxton devotes herself to abolishing the ghostly presences of Great Men: "Freud's pinstripe trousers were quickly dismissed, no more than a wasp shadow lying by the door to the third room off the landing. Picasso was more difficult, leaving as he did a mass of angles for Mrs Paxton to walk through". Elsewhere, there are some vivid surreal touches: "The cries of the child were a distant cutting: trees fell, giving out flakes of red dust as the chain of high sound bit the bark". But when the outside world is more realistically introduced it seems as oddly intrusive in the text as in the lives of the Paxtons themselves: "Water boiled. Mr Paxton went over to the wireless in the corner and twiddled a knob to hear news from Sir Anthony Eden".

The symbolism can seem over-obvious and rather simplistic. George's Analytic Engine, supposedly introduced to represent the rising dominance of dry rationalism, is one example. Alice's obsession with equal sizes as she divides chocolate amounts almost to a parody of the democratic concerns of the 1960s. But on the whole *Alice fell* is stronger, less whimsical stuff than the predecessor it most resembles, *Wild Nights*. Against the imperfectly realized sense of historical development, Emma Tennant sets the more compelling counterpoint of cyclical change, as represented by the turning seasons in the countryside around the house. Despite its short length, the novel achieves an impressive feeling of spaciousness. The prose itself is beautifully measured and graceful, and though perhaps one wouldn't turn the page on account of the story's narrative impetus, one certainly does so for the pure pleasure of the style.

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HUTCHINSON £7.95

Reasons of state

By David Pryce-Jones

WILLIAM FRANKEL:
Israel Observed
An Anatomy of the State
288pp. Thames and Hudson. £7.95.
0 500 01247 4

DAN V. SEGRE:
A Crisis of Identity
Israel and Zionism
182pp. Oxford University Press. £6.50.
0 19 215862 7

Has there ever been so singular a state as Israel? A new fangled construct typical of the age of nationalism, it is also a revenant from the graveyard of history. Its essential formative experiences have taken place outside its frontiers. Indeed, it has no agreed frontiers but only borders maintained these thirty years by force of arms. It is difficult enough to describe with justice the extraordinary diverse connections between the immense Jewish past and the narrow Israeli present; and quite as difficult to visualize how the Israel of today will connect to whatever the Soviet Union, the United States and the Muslim Middle East may have in store for it. When Prime Minister Begin reiterates that the West Bank will *never* be separated from Israel or that Jerusalem will *never* be divided again, the sound is heard of whistling in the dark to keep up courage.

Circumstances may easily and convincingly be supposed in which Israel is exterminated, the state and the citizens alike. The view is sometimes expressed on the Marxist left that the expedient murder of two million Israelis may be necessary to avert the two hundred million victims in a nuclear exchange brought about by super-power confrontation in the region. Again, demographers argue that the birth-rate of Palestinian and other Arabs is so superior that whatever political resolutions lie ahead the Jewish majority in Israel must eventually give way and be diluted beyond recognition.

That the survivors of the Nazi and Soviet persecutions would make a success of creating an independent state was against all odds, and there could have been no foreseeing the negative effect which was to follow, of externalizing and formalizing in the public arena what had been previously the private or social predicament of the Jew. Where once the Jew had been a pariah in a ghetto, now Israel is a pariah among nations, an extended ghetto to be subjected to all manner of particular discriminations. Countries such as China, Pakistan, Tanzania, Mali, North Korea, where over the centuries there has been virtually no contact with Jews, nor awareness of Judaism, now seize upon any manufactured pretext to denounce and abuse Israel. Governments of European countries in which the Jewish destiny has been shaped no longer give consideration to the historic role their nations played in that destiny. Intolerance of Jews is no different because cloaked in ideological anti-Zionist language. The Jew is still not to be allowed what everyone else is allowed.

The Israel which William Frankel so reasonably describes in *Israel Observed* is very ordinary and uninspiring; its economic and bureaucratic muddle is characteristic of everywhere else; it is fit neither for salvation nor apocalypse. Nobody is going to be building conspiracy theories upon this material, and in the circumstances that is perhaps the best claim to make for it. Mr Frankel treats Israel as though its present condition were some sort of usual consummation, and its history a matter of uncontentious record. Perhaps only an author accustomed to dear old England could have rendered Israel so safe and passionless. The country he observes is a nuts-and-bolts affair of institutions, of parliaments and parties, a trade union organization, a free press, interesting agricultural arrangements and a sound legal system. Leading personalities are sketched in conventional phrases about their engaging manner, their hospitable wives, their fondness for telling stories and so on. Mr Frankel is not one to risk wandering away from received opinion, and if he can call German Jews solid, for instance, or Galician Jews extrovert but crafty, then he will.

Anyone who wants to be guided round the executive or administrative structures of Israel can rely on Mr Frankel, but can this really be the Israel which is reported at the eye of the storm? Truth is not necessarily the whole truth. The geo-political dimension is missing. Neither Israel's achievements nor its defects can be measured without reference to why Jews are there in the first place, what their objectives are, and what physical and moral considerations arise. Israeli Arabs rate about six pages and the Palestinians in the occupied territories none at all. Yet the energies of the people and the institutions he discusses are to a great extent overshadowed by the unresolved status of the Palestinians, for upon their definition also depends the definition of Israel.

Existentialist questions ignored by Mr Frankel are Dan V. Segre's whole concern. He is a Zionist, but thoughtful, anxious, because he does not see how Israelis are to continue being Jewish. There is a paradox. Zionists insisted that only a Jewish state could offer them emancipation as Jews and human beings; they have such a state, they now live secular lives in it, only to find that their state's *raison d'être* as a home for Jews has been undercut in the process. The Jewish content of the new state is already more a question of form than of spirit. If Zionists, now Israelis, are going to cease to be Jewish in any significant sense, might they not have saved themselves a lot of trouble by assimilating somewhere else? Zionism was after all not the only possible response to antisemitism. Why bother with Israel if it is not Jewish? Put another way, Zionists had been trying to establish the right to be like everyone else, while also reserving the right to be different because Jewish. The result is confusion, loss, crisis.

What has been wrong, in Professor Segre's opinion, is the attempt to normalize Jews according to non-Jewish norms. In its dispersion the entire Jewish community at least had a clear and sufficient view of itself. The Talmud conditioned Jews everywhere, and provided not just codes for religious behaviour, but a cultural and moral and even political framework. A way of life was at hand. Leaders of the community were chosen from among those who best studied the Talmud, they were married to the daughters of notables rich enough to support them. The ensuing social mobility, based on learning, ensured a "democratic aristocracy" and Professor Segre recommends that something of the kind be revived for Israel, though quite how it might function he does not say. To him, the development of the Jewish spirit is the abiding justification for Zionism, and therefore for Israel. Plenty of states have fine farmers and tank-drivers and nurses, but where will Jews be found? The complete Israeli would be Moses and Spartacus all in one.

Far from that, the Israeli has been spiritually colonized by the West, materialist, conformist, atheist, gentile, as the West is. Israeli institutions are imitations of Western models; the Israeli élite has nothing much Jewish about it, and neither does Israeli culture. What to Mr Frankel is a good example of a modern orderly society, to Professor Segre looks like becoming a drab and inert parody. Hitherto a Jew had been defined by the relationship with God, and the solitude which this relationship entailed—"the need to transform this unique and uncomfortable situation into a source of strength", Professor Segre declares, has always been the central problem of being Jewish. Instead of continuing the link between himself and this legacy of solitude, the Israeli has forfeited his identity by copying definitions typical of the contemporary West, in particular nationalism and socialism. In the Jewish context, nationalism and socialism, referring only to the collective, are not merely alien notions but false idols of the kind always inveighed against and resisted, and a Jew who submits to them makes a slave of himself. Israel without its roots, its solitude, turns into another Third World country, to be likened to those African states which have rejected Western rule but not Western values, in effect remaining colonized, without the capacity to progress and modernize on their own while no longer having a valid tradition in support. No legitimacy anywhere, no prospects but emigration and collapse.

The creeds of strangers and conquerors have often before attracted Jews, as witnessed by those who abandoned their beliefs for the sake of Hellenism, the Enlightenment, or Marxism. A central core has none the less held fast, stiff-necked indeed, which explains why Judaism has survived. Perhaps Professor Segre romanticizes the lost Jewish commonwealth, and would have found that the "democratic aristocracy" he admires was in practice compounded by as much superstition and ignorance as the parallel Christian and Islamic commonwealths. But a case can certainly be made that the future of Israel depends upon perpetuating what has been the Jewish identity in the past. The hard-pressed minority who think like that in Israel, orthodox Jews for the most part, will be gratefully amazed that the case has been made by an articulate professor of political science.

People. we know, are unable to add a cubit to their stature by taking thought—it is no use urging faith upon those who have lost it, which is ultimately Professor Segre's remedy. How an industrial and technological society like Israel is to be squared with a resurrection of Talmudic values is not clear, but then questions of identity usually defy professorial tidiness. If there proves to be no concrete way of remaining Jewish in a secular, socialist and nationalist Israel. then Zionism will have brought about what its assimilationist and antisemitic enemies failed to do, and Moses and Spartacus will both be nowhere. But an inner zest in Professor Segre's essay suggests that he thinks this unlikely, and that once again, in the face of the world, somehow the Jews will pull through, and Israel with them.

A saint of Africa

By Richard Gray

ELIZABETH ISICHEI:
Entirely for God
The Life of Michael Iwene Tansi
144pp. Macmillan. £1.60.
0 333 285 042

Liberation, in Africa as elsewhere, confronts many different forms of oppression and enslavement. Michael Tansi, an obscure Igbo priest who spent the last fourteen years of his life in an English monastery, encountered injustice and evil in three principal dimensions. Out of this conflict emerged a saint.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, when Tansi was a young man, racism was inherent in the work of the missionaries who were helping to transform his whole environment. With skill and sympathy, Elizabeth Isichei sketches in this background. By sacrifice, endurance and devotion, the missionaries were laying the foundations of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria; but they thought, contemptuously, that it would take "six generations" to form a genuine Igbo Christian, and they treated their converts with disdain and suspicion. The Irish, or Alsatian, model was all too often their sole criterion.

As a result, young Igbo who sought, like Tansi, to become priests, faced a formidable set of obstacles. The long years of seminary training, universally demanded of Catholic priests, were indefinitely prolonged and punctuated by humiliations. Ordination, in these circumstances, demanded a heroic blend of determination, self-control and abnegation. Many Africans rebelled, and challenged the basic racist assumptions of their day by a frontal assault. Tansi, and two other of his companions, persevered. Thereby they effectively shattered the stereotype and opened the way for their successors.

This liberation from racist paternalism could be admired even by those who had little or no sympathy with Tansi's further aims. As a parish priest from 1938 to 1950, he sought to liberate his parishioners from certain pratices enshrined in Igbo religion. For the missionaries, pre-Christian Igboland was the kingdom of Satan, and Tansi appears to have remained intellectually imprisoned within the narrow limits of their vision. Even so, his marshalling of Igbo maidens to defeat the demands of traditional masqueraders is, perhaps justifiably, acclaimed by Professor Isichei as a victory for the rights of women. Certainly he emphasized in his ministry the spiritual formation of women and introduced many radical changes in Igbo family life. But his encounter with traditional culture merits more attention than it receives in this book.

Much the most important sphere of liberation was Tansi's mastery of self: his consistent pursuit of holiness. Hagiography presents many pitfalls for a professional historian, but the account of Tansi as a parish priest, by far the longest chapter in this slender book, is a piece of brilliant historical reconstruction, based almost entirely on oral interviews, and presented with notable insights born of the author's familiarity with the Christian Igbo environment.

Ascetic charity was the hallmark of his holiness. Although Church leaders, both missionary and indigenous, were increasingly preoccupied with finance, insensibly becoming "a privileged bourgeoisie", Michael Tansi "opted for poverty, and never opted out". He was completely identified with his flock; his care, love and generosity became legendary. One after another, informants testified how lives were changed by him, and hard statistics tell the same story: twenty-seven out of forty-seven priests in the archdiocese come from one of the parishes which he created out of the bush, some forty years ago.

His sudden icy plunge into English monastic life is well described, but not fully explained. Perhaps the sources covering this and certain aspects of Tansi's interior life will never be available, though this work should stimulate further research. As Professor Isichei remarks, official canonization "requires the support of a strong pressure group and ample financial resources". Instead she demonstrates why Tansi is already "a saint by acclamation". This beautifully constructed book deserves to become a minor classic, treasured by Christians in Africa and elsewhere.

Massacre and aftermath

By David Marshall Lang

CHRISTOPHER J. WALKER:
Armenia
Survival of a Nation
446pp. Croom Helm. £14.95.
0 7099 0210 7

Few events in modern history have aroused more widespread concern than the virtual elimination of the Armenians in Turkey between 1894 and 1922. The slaughter was begun by Sultan Abdul Hamid in 1894-96, continued with greater thoroughness by the Young Turk dictators in 1915, and the survivors were then largely picked off by the Kemalists between 1920 and 1922. Today, only one tenth of historical Armenia—namely, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic—has any sizeable Armenian population. The vast provinces of Eastern Turkey once comprising Turkish Armenia remain barren and under-populated. Survivors of the massacres dwell in widely separated parts of the globe, including the Lebanon, Iran, France, Australia and the United States of America.

There has been a recent revival of demands in the Armenian diaspora for restitution for the losses sustained more than half a century ago—although Turkey has taken the bland line that the massacres never happened. Armenian hotheads in several countries have made murderous attacks on individual Turkish diplomats and their families.

Armenia: Survival of a Nation has solid merits, but it is seriously flawed by Christopher Walker's pro-Armenian bias, which obtrudes on virtually every page. Mr Walker does not explain adequately why the Armenians, who had lived in proximity to the Turks and Kurds for eight centuries, and had earned the Sultan's favour as the "loyal nation", should suddenly be singled out for extermination during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Apart from economic rivalry, social and religious antagonisms, Great Power intrigues, and Turkish chauvinism, there is little doubt that the treasonable activity and terrorist provocation practised by Armenian nationalist bodies played an even larger part in precipitating the catastrophe than Mr Walker himself concedes.

Instead of rational analysis of events, we are often treated to emotional rhetoric which seems out of place in a work of historical scholarship. What is one to make of the rhapsodic section where Mr Walker describes the relations between the Great Powers on the eve of the First World War—"Distractedly wandering through thicket and briar, like the unhappy lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, they sought a Puck who would squeeze Love-in-idleness upon the correct eyelids"? A quaint way to approach a world conflict in which so many people died, including a million and a half Armenians.

Another obstacle to taking this book seriously is the author's habit of dividing all characters mentioned into "goodies" and "baddies". Anyone who has ever written critically of Armenians is treated as a fool, a falsifier or worse. Sometimes this tendency leads to grave injustice, as in the case of Sir Mark Sykes, MP, who in his youth was inclined to like the Turks, as a result of which Walker calls him "a man of superficial, snobbish impressions", who "carried his imperial and racist prejudices to all corners of the globe".

Now if Mr Walker had read Roger Adelson's biography of Sykes he would know that in December, 1918, the British MP went to the rescue of Armenians in Aintab and Nisibin who were threatened with slaughter by local Turks. This exertion hastened Sir Mark's premature death early in 1919, and the grateful Armenians sent a delegation to attend his funeral. Even more grotesque is Mr Walker's diatribe about Ernest Bevin, who, as Foreign Secretary, resisted Stalin's attempt to annex parts of Eastern Turkey in 1945 and 1946. For their refusal to countenance Soviet claims to former Armenian territories, Bevin and his advisers are likened to the bloodthirsty Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid.

After 375 pages of text the author concludes with the Walker Plan for making amends to the Turkish Armenians dispossessed between 1894 and 1922. He suggests that the Turkish government and universities should publicly apologize for what took place then. He also recommends that the ruined Armenian city of Ani, on the Turkish side of the Turco-Soviet border, should be handed to Soviet Armenia—thus giving Soviet tanks a foothold on the plain leading towards Ankara.

The Turks are a proud if impoverished people. The idea of a public apology is hardly likely to appeal to them, especially as any surviving perpetrators of the massacres are now between eighty and a hundred years old; nor is the idea of handing Turkish territory to the Soviet Union likely to commend itself to the Western alliance. It would have been more to the point if Mr Walker had drawn attention to the grave losses sustained by the Armenian community in Cyprus during the Turkish invasion of 1974. During this operation, the Armenian High School in Nicosia was bombed and destroyed by the Turkish Air Force, and thousands of inoffensive Cypriot Armenians were driven into exile. This invasion is not even mentioned in Mr Walker's book, although it is an eloquent example of traditional Turkish militarism perpetrated in modern times under the very noses of the Nato powers, who were bound by treaty to prevent it.

On the credit side, Mr Walker's book has an excellent selected bibliography, clear and accurate maps, and biographical notes on 135 leading Armenians who have figured in national affairs during the past 150 years.

Of trumps and tricks

By Graham Hough

MICHAEL DUMMETT:
The Game of Tarot
From Ferrara to Salt Lake City
600pp. 36 illustrations. Duckworth. £45.
0 7156 1014 7
Twelve Tarot Games
242pp. Duckworth. £5.95.
0 7156 1488 6

Madame Sosostris the famous clairvoyante of *The Waste Land* had a wicked pack of cards. Eliot in a note suggested that they were Tarot cards, but confessed that he was "not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack". He was even less familiar than he pretends, for besides his invention for his own poetic purpose of cards that do not exist, his note is both obscure and mistaken. He would not get away with this today. Michael Dummett begins his book by saying that Eliot in the 1920s evidently expected his readers to know no more than himself; but now "just over half a century later, probably most people in Britain and the United States either have actually seen a Tarot pack or have at least seen pictures of the cards". This seems to me a great exaggeration, and symptomatic of the aura of slight dottiness the Tarot is wont to diffuse; but still it is true enough that the cards are now pretty widespread, and whatever mysteries they do or do not conceal there need be none about what the pack consists of.

It is Professor Dummett's contention that there is no mystery at all; the cards are playing-cards and that alone; their use in fortune-telling is a comparatively modern perversion of their purpose; the images on the trumps and court cards convey no symbolic meaning, and have no other purpose than easy recognition—all of which he maintains with a passion and intensity that this not very momentous subject hardly seems to demand. In one aspect his book is a minute and highly specialized inquiry (in collaboration, as he is scrupulously careful to insist, with Sylvia Mann) into the history of playing-cards. Very few people can have gone through the detailed and intricate investigation that this enterprise requires, and without it no one is in a position to argue. Much of the argument in any case is more than ordinary curiosity can bear. To the general reader it will seem that the earlier history is conjectural and obscure: but what seems to be quite firmly established is that Tarot cards are unknown outside Europe, make their first appearance in the fifteenth century, and for the first 300 years of their existence—till the end of the eighteenth century—were simply used for playing games and had no association at all with occult wisdom. Professor Dummett arrives at this conclusion by his formidable cartographical learning, but it is entirely confirmed by such fragmentary information as I can discover: among the rich profusion of symbolism spawned in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Rosicrucians, Cabbalists, followers of Paracelsus and Cornelius Agrippa no trace of the imagery of the Tarot is to be discerned.

For those who want the truth, here it seems to be; for those who would like the truth to be interesting as well as true it seems a pity. But it must reluctantly be conceded that the Tarot was not devised 177 years after the Flood by a committee of magi under the chairmanship of Hermes Trismegistus. Tarot cards are a special version of ordinary playing cards, and no one associates playing cards with arcane wisdom or secret traditions. What is special about the Tarot is the addition to the normal four-suit pack of a further suit of twenty-one trumps, plus an added card, the Fool. These are all picture cards, each bearing the image of some human or supernatural or allegorical figure. Since they form a strangely assorted and enigmatic company, they naturally arouse curiosity. Those who are temperamentally susceptible to mysterious iconography are drawn to them like flies to a honey pot; and even those who are not will admit that they have a haunting and faintly disturbing fascination, and give rise to many questions. Why does the Pope have a consort the Papesse? Why is the Hanged Man hanging upside down by his left foot? Why is there a crayfish crawling out of the water to greet the Moon? Professor Dummett will have none of these vain questionings. The figures are just the sort of thing anyone might think up in the fifteenth century; they have no meaning and it is useless to look for one.

Blinded with science as we have been, we may still glimpse enough daylight to contest some of these points. The figures on the Tarot trumps "are in fact just what someone of the time would be likely to pick up if he were asked to select a series of subjects for a set of twenty-one picture cards"—indeed? With due respect to an eminent philosopher and logician, this blank assertion is not evidently true, and if it were, it would be no explanation. The fact that these figures are of a kind not unfamiliar in the fifteenth century gives no clue at all as to why these particular ones were picked; and it is surely absurd to use the word "picked" at all for designs as bizarre and elaborated as some of these. However, let us follow in Dummett's incontrovertibly positivist footsteps. The special feature of the Tarot is the suit of trumps. Not only that—but it is by way of the Tarot that the concept of trumps enters the art of card-playing. Trumps, with a ranking order of their own and a rank such that the lowest trump is higher than the highest card of other suits, are an invention of the fifteenth century, appear first in the Tarot and from there spread to other games. In games with the normal pack of course they do not have a suit of their own; one of the ordinary suits is promoted ad hoc. But either way there is a lively and interesting addition to trick-taking games, persisting of course in the familiar games of today.

So far there is a continuous line of argument. From now on the reader who is not a cartomaniac gets deeply bogged down in endless descriptions of the games, with the national and local variations, that can be played with one or other of the versions of the Tarot pack. The amount of research required to complete this documentation was prodigious, and much of it was done on the spot, by travel all over Europe. But how useful is the result of such research, even for the purpose of reference? How many people in the course of a year will want to know how to play Slovenian four-handed Tarok, or Ombra arrabiata, or four-handed Minchiato without partners, third form 1820, or any but the smallest sample of the two hundred games recorded in detail in this book? As much as most readers, even enthusiastic card-players, will be able to take is to be found in the author's smaller book *Twelve Tarot Games*, which also contains a much condensed and clarified historical introduction.

Why this cloud of obscure learning in the larger volume was ever accumulated is hard to imagine, and the explanation given in the introduction is so extraordinary that it is worth recording. In 1968 Dummett was overwhelmed by contemporary political events to such an extent that he was unable to do any serious work on philosophy or logic, and plunged into the history of the Tarot pack as a refuge. "It presented sufficiently difficult and sufficiently intriguing problems to exercise the mind, but provoked no anxiety". And what were the political events that drove Professor Dummett to this state of mind? The horrors of the Vietnam war, the invasion of Czechoslovakia? No: neither of these is mentioned; the crucial occurrences are the assassination in America of Martin Luther King and later that of Robert Kennedy, who Dummett believes "might have saved that country"—from what he does not say; and above all the passing in England of the Commonwealth Immigration Act—"the most shameful Act ever passed". There seems a strange lack of proportion here; but in a world full of sin and misery every man must make himself insensible to most of it if he is to continue to exist, and some will choose almost arbitrarily what shocks the conscience most. At all events, it was as a relief from his work against what he calls racialism that he plunged into the history of playing cards, and it is to this that we owe the present mass of recondite but trivial information.

Not all Dummett's investigations are so freed from emotional involvement. The attribution of occult significance to the Tarot, and above all its use for fortune-telling arouses his deep indignation. "It is a mistake", he says, "to view it as a harmless piece of nonsense . . . . People who take this superstition seriously may ruin their lives by following the advice they receive from the cards". And he takes as an instance the sample Tarot reading in which a young woman consulting the cards about a proposal of marriage is advised that her suitor is insincere and that she should break it off. Here something of a gap opens up between Professor Dummett and his material; learned as he is about cards I cannot think he knows much about the psychology of fortune-telling. No one consults the cards about a marriage proposal unless they are in two minds about it. The advice received can only give one of two answers that are already quite clearly present; and no one follows advice unless it has a pretty strong conformity to existing inclination. In any case the engines of prediction are numerous; if it wasn't the Tarot it would be tea-leaves, or the I Ching, or the stars, or the ouijah board or the lines of the hand.

But Dummett's protective indignation is for the Tarot in particular. "It would have been good if those with a taste for magic could have kept their hands off what does not belong to them: they have an abundant literature of their own." They have indeed; and ludicrous and distasteful as Dummett finds it, he has been driven to explore a part of it very thoroughly by his desire to exculpate the Tarot from any complicity with these follies. In so doing he becomes not a little fascinated with what he disapproves: a chapter on Cartomancy and a long substantial chapter on the Occult, besides being models of lucid wide-ranging exposition, are the liveliest and most attractive in the book. Briefly, he establishes without much doubt that the use of cards for fortune-telling is not as is often supposed an ancient practice: with one or two insignificant exceptions it is unknown before the eighteenth century. It formed no part of the art of divination in the days when divination was seriously believed in, and it could not have done, for absurd though the predictive systems were, they formed part of what could quite properly be called occult *science*—that is they were attached to some larger, seriously-held system of physical-cum-metaphysical ideas. Playing cards, including the Tarot, were never recognized as belonging in this sphere. Madame Sosostris is not a degenerate descendant of the Delphic sibyl; she is not even in the same league.

The exaltation of the Tarot into a repertory of occult knowledge can be quite precisely dated. It occurred in 1781, with the publication of the eighth volume of Antoine Court de Gébelin's *Le Monde Primitif*. Court de Gébelin, a Swiss Protestant who later settled in Paris, was one of those speculative antiquarian anthropologists who were not uncommon in the eighteenth century and survived well into the next. He was a Freemason and was involved in the theosophical and illuminist offshoots of masonry that were to be a marked influence on later occultism. He believed in a Golden Age in which man had once lived in unity and peace, and *Le Monde Primitif* attempts to reconstruct this happy state by a variety of means, including the allegorical interpretation of myths and the etymological study of language. His idea was to study *le Génie Symbolique de l'Antiquité* through myths, works of art, heraldic emblems and popular images. A sort of proto-Lévi-Strauss, in fact, less absurd and more interesting than Dummett suggests. It is true that on seeing a Tarot pack he immediately leapt to the conclusion that it enshrined the symbols of the ancient Egyptian religion; but Egyptian fancies unchecked by authentic information were common at this period. The Tarot in Court de Gébelin's eyes was nothing less than a compendium of the ancient

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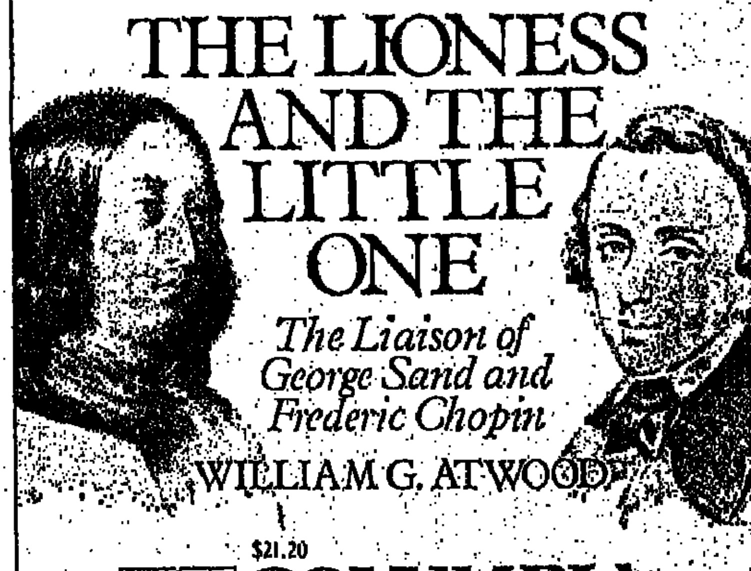

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faith, deliberately so designed by the Egyptian priests to preserve it from destruction, and actually preserved by the Gypsies, miscalled Bohemians, but really scattered remnants of the old Egyptian race. These are wild fancies; but his own remarks on the Tarot images are entirely sensible. He observes that they are emblems of the principal forces in nature, society and human experience: "On comprend ainsi d'avance que toutes ces Cartes sont autant de Tableaux allégoriques relatifs à l'ensemble de la vie, et susceptible d'une infinité de combinaisons."

A passing suggestion of Gébelin's that was to prove of immense consequence for Tarot occultism was that the twenty-two Tarot trumps correspond in some way to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In his admirably detailed tracing of the cartomantic fortunes of the Tarot Dummett scarcely sees the importance of this. Its importance is that for centuries the Hebrew alphabet had been the great organ of mystical numerology, the key to the hidden meaning of the Scriptures, in the Jewish Cabala. Thus at one step the quite recent fancies about the Tarot trumps are united with the vast storehouse of Cabalist speculation, as antique, obscure, ramifying and controversial as the most ardent mystagogue could desire. Since the Cabala in its origins had been tinged by neo-Platonism and Gnosticism and had in its turn been eagerly adopted by the Christian occultists of the Renaissance, the Tarot thus becomes the quite illegitimate heir, if not of the wisdom of the ancient Egyptians, of an immense and highly developed corpus of esoteric doctrine.

The principal agent in the elaboration of these ideas was Eliphas Lévi — this mystic *nom-de-guerre* concealing the person of Alphonse-Louis Constant, the most celebrated and influential figure in the nineteenth-century occult revival. He developed and systematized the attribution of the Tarot trumps to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet —a fruitful source of controversy ever since—and conveniently forgetting the quite recent origin of the idea, wove the Tarot into his cloudy and eclectic synthesis. There were further ramifications in France, and from there the whole paraphernalia passed to England, mediated chiefly by the Order of the Golden Dawn. Here the Tarot becomes part of the underworld of English intellectual history and comes to the notice of those who enter this region in pursuit of other game. A few modest excursions in search of Yeats's intellectual background will reveal exactly the landscape that Dummett describes, and it is remarkable that, writing out of considerable dislike for the whole business, he should have given what must surely be the best compendious account of the modern occult revival that we have.

It is only fair to add that he is not without predecessors. Christopher McIntosh in *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* (1972) covers much of this ground; and there are many others. The occultists themselves are not all sunk in obscurantism. Gareth Knight, Alfred Douglas and Francis King, all writing with some sort of adhesion to the magical tradition, quite happily acknowledge the same account of the origins of esoteric Tarot interpretation as Dummett gives here. So there is really no dispute about the facts. Interpretation is another matter; and it seems to have changed its ground. No one now believes the Tarot pack as such to date back to remote antiquity; no one believes that the cards were designed to carry a specific message, b Egyptian priests or anyone els Dummett seems to deduce from th that they therefore mean nothing But no one who has felt the charm of this curious picture-gallery, n one who has really looked at i will be satisfied with such a con clusion. No collection of images compiled by human agency is ne merely random. It must alw have been obedient to some psych compulsion, individual or collectiv And the images of the Tarot are fa from random. They represent, a Court de Gébelin said they d "the leaders of society, tempo and spiritual; the physical powers agriculture; the cardinal virtues marriage, death and resurrection creation; the various turns of fortune; the Sage, the Fool, and Time who consumes all". An alle gorical tableau of the whole of life indeed. Such a pageant of arche types, acted out by figures that are both familiar and puzzling, must inevitably stimulate reverie and speculation. It is probable that some tincture of these stronger waters enters even into the dulle card game.

Games are trials of skill; but they are also allegories of life, of varying degrees of complexity; the bearers of symbolic meaning. Ha manners, rites, and all stylized forms of behaviour. We are not satis fied by the bare contest without the accompanying imagery. We co'l play chess with buttons or numbered counters; but we do not. This is particularly evident with card games—where the imagery is s rich and so surprisingly stable th it must answer to some imaginati need, sound a faint echo to experi ences we have encountered aw from the card-table. Would Profess Dummett have us believe that there is nothing symbolic about Happy Families or Beggar my Neighbour?

Singing Suffolk

By Ronald Blythe

GINETTE DUNN:

The Fellowship of Song
Popular Singing Traditions in East Suffolk

254pp. Croom Helm. £12.50.
0 7099 0044 9

Sickert attempted to dissuade artists from settling in Constable's Suffolk by calling it a "sucked orange". There must have been some anxiety on Ginette Dunn's part when she decided to base herself in the place which had inspired one of the finest village investigations of this century, George Ewart Evans's *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay*. Could Blaxhall and neighbouring Snape, itself as celebrated, though in another context—yield more? Indeed, should it be expected to when such vivid interpretations of their character and landscape must of necessity have introduced in the people an awareness and self-consciousness which did not exist before? The local pubs, the stage for Ms Dunn's singers, are packed with Americans from the big Nato base nearby, Aldeburgh Festival-goers, holiday-makers, birdwatchers and youngsters attending pop, jazz or country-and-western concerts at Snape Maltings; and have been for years.

Yet it has to be said that what she has to add to the subject vindicates her choice of venue. Old ground it may be, and pretty sophisticated ground it has certainly become in recent years, but she has worked it in such a way as to produce a book which stands on its own because it throws in its lot so totally and so percipiently with the indigenous element. She has enquired not only what and when and where they sing, but why they sing.

I can recall the curious mixture of disgust and fascination which, at the age of about seventeen, I experienced in a "singing-pub" when an old man sang "Windin' up her little ol' ball of Wool". Many pubs then did not allow singing; it was thought low or vaguely threatening, and anyone who started to sing was told "Outside" by the landlord. Hence the search by those who liked them for the singing-pubs, which usually meant the ones where everybody sang to a piano or an accordion, though sometimes ones where, as in Snape and Blaxhall, there were singing-masters, each with his own repertory of ballads, who took the floor Saturday after Saturday, year after year. But although the prevalence of singing makes up so large a part of the past happiness recalled by older Suffolk people singing, as I can remember, above the rattle of the silk-looms and machines in the coconut-matting factories, in singing-out gangs in the cold spring fields and, in the evenings, at near-defunct forges—there is clearly something not entirely typical about the form of it which continues to take place in and around Blaxhall and Snape.

Ms Dunn lets her singers give their own versions of the rough and often cruel social conditions of the recent past which have been the subject of a number of post-war studies, and she has captured their notoriously evasive personalities and speech idioms (rather than dialect) with fidelity. But perhaps she does not say quite enough about the three main factors which have made the experiences of this remnant of the ancient land-working people of East Anglia untypical of the area: the agricultural industrial complexes of the Garrett family at Leiston and Snape; the North Sea, only a few miles away; and the Aldeburgh Festival. And even more overpowering are the Americans at Bentwaters, the vast Nato base just up the road, who have been "married" into these villages for close on forty years.

A question which arises is, is the indigenous pub-singing an attempt by the Lings, the Harts and the Webbs, and others, to retain their rural identity in the face of unique natural, scientific and cultural disturbances, or did they long ago recognize that the singing which was so common a feature of the old labouring society is now uncommon and intriguing to most people living in their neighbourhood — and has this recognition subtly altered their performances? Ms Dunn writes that

> a kind of subversive activity has been going on which is innate in the communities, unconsciously honoured and carried on against many odds, both environmental and temporal [. . .] Song is an expression of self, but since self has no meaning outside society, song expresses man's understanding of his humanity, his contact with others, his view of the world, and his realization that the world has a view of him.

Some time ago, while searching for illustrations to a book, I discovered a haunting and quite unforgettable photograph. Marked "Blaxhall 1936", it showed a man in a trilby hat playing a harmonium in a summer meadow, with the grass half-way up the instrument. Surrounding him were three violinists, a trumpeter and a cellist, and the singers, the undergrowth to their knees. Whatever it was that was happening in this surreal idyll, it would not have been linked by Bob Hart with the music he would have been engaged in that summer at the Ship or the Lion.

Ms Dunn makes the performance of the songs the key to her understanding of both them and the singers. She offers little or no analysis of the words, which veer between poetry and near-gibberish, but gives a series of penetrating studies of a man and his song (rarely a woman and her song) at the moment of special unification achieved in the act of singing. Since the words are so well known and have been heard in the pub hundreds of times before, the enchantment is in their rendition. Thus the art is one of a self-revelation which is audacious or tragic, or which takes the audience's breath away, or which can open the gates of its past to the community, linking it to the world of its ancestors.

These descriptions are splendid; psychologically intriguing and very moving. Nothing is missed; the musicianship, the artistry, the sexuality, the degree of drunkenness, the battle against the enemies — mocking teenagers, baffled American servicemen, the juke-box and, perhaps most formidable of all, the customers who neither look nor listen but just go on chatting.

Sometimes, noticing that there are young girls present, the singer feels constrained to bowdlerize. To many in the pub he is an anti-social element. Worse, his voice is being drowned by the country-and-western boys in a kind of lyric fratricide. Only the Blaxhall Ship maintains the old singing in much of its old purity.

Not that many of the songs are old at all. There are some Georgian and Victorian ballads, both sweet and wicked, but these are heavily supplemented by twentieth-century village school songs, by hymns and by songs learned from the *News of the World*, the most popular source of new material. Though the Snape and Blaxhall youngsters enjoy the folk aspect of pop, they turn against this earlier form of pub music, associating it with old age and drink, and being particularly embarrassed by its sexuality. But the passive and active tradition-bearers, as Ginette Dunn calls them, take their stance, and, whether it is "O Where is the Boy Who Truly Repents?" or "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross", the singer sings.

Images and their vicissitudes

By Peter Conrad

ROBERT HALSBAND:

The Rape of the Lock and its Illustrations 1714-1896

160pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £11.50.
0 19 812098 2

The Rape of the Lock implores illustration. Its lusts are visual: the Baron, prostrate at his profane altar, ogles the trophy with "ardent Eyes". The poem develops through a series of ocular conquests. In its world, where all are martyrs to the cosmetic inviolability of appearance, things are managed by being seen. Sight is sanctification but also mortification: among Belinda's erotic arsenal are counted all the "Murders of your Eye". People aspire either to imitate images (as Belinda, aided by the sylphs, vies to turn herself into that heavenly form which admonishes her from her mirror) or else, more impiously, to own those images (as the Baron ventures to do by seizing the lock).

For Belinda, the rape's shame is its visibility: she would rather have been despoiled of "hairs less in sight". In the Baron's case ("He saw, he wish'd") seeing leads on to spoliation, but for Belinda the imperious eye hopes to keep the object it views at a reverential distance. Belinda organizes the poem's imagery of surveillance. The sylphs, guarded by their invisibility, watch over human doings from on high; the Thames with proprietorial smugness "surveys his rising Tow'rs"; Belinda on the river is the cynosure of admiring eyes, and employs her own eyes as weapons, striking the gazers with fatal glances; the courtiers are adept at interpreting "Motions, Looks, and Eyes", the ocular proofs of intrigue, and Belinda during the card game "reviews her Force" like a commander superintending a field of battle. At the end of the poem, the Muse's special prerogative is one of sight: she sees the lock levitating, "Tho' mark'd by none but quick Poetic Eyes".

Pope identifies this poetic gift of perception with the faculty of divination:

So *Rome's* great Founder to the Heav'ns withdrew,
To *Proculus* alone confess'd in view.

That last phrase, given the privileged and sanctimonious voyeurism of *The Rape of the Lock*, suggests that sight is a confidence, a confession, because the things seen are always secret or arcane. In the visual order of the poem, even thoughts can be rendered visible, like those "gay Ideas" which "crowd the vacant Brain", or the erotic suggestion which Ariel watches invading Belinda's mind during the card game; and this delivery of the mind's fugitive workings to public view is the purgative function of the confessional. Poetic imagination, like religious belief, is for Pope in this poem the power to see what's not there—the opportunity to share the Muse's glimpse of the transubstantiated lock (which means to immortalize the poetic image) or to witness the aerial ministries of those post-Miltonic angels, the sylphs. For though the sylphs are omniscient, they are unseen, and this immunity allegorizes them: they represent a higher realm of causes and purposes, operating behind and above human calculation. At the toilet table, "Betty's praised for Labour not her own", and though mortals convict women of levity, they are "blind to Truth", which means blind to the contrivances of the sylphs.

This is one reason why *The Rape of the Lock* lends itself to illustration. In its society, immaculate appearance is sovereign, and the superficial (to alter a phrase of Wilde's) is the only profundity. Belinda, performing the rites of pride, is engaged in an act of self-illustration. Beauty is not something which belongs to her but something she applies to herself, a tribute expensively assembled from India and Arabia, a cosmetic redemption of perishable nature—her smiles, Pope notes, have to be repaired.

Barthes called Garbo's face "an Idea", capitalized and therefore Platonic. He remarked on its plastered pallor, which made of it a death mask worn by its owner in life, impervious to emotion and sexually undefined. Hence Garbo's determination to hide its organic deterioration from the cameras, under overhanging hats or behind oversize dark glasses. Belinda's face is a comparable invention. She wears her face, and (a rare and slightly devilish human power) hides behind it. Pope hints at its transparency, but goes on to explain that the face is not, as moralists suppose, an image of the mind—rather the mind is an immaterial equivalent of the face. He comments that

Her lively Looks a sprightly Mind disclose,
Quick as her Eyes, and as unfix'd as those

—but then the pampered and annointed face becomes as opaque as Garbo's, proposing itself as the source of character and identity and censoring moral appeals to the mind or heart supposedly lurking behind:

If to her share some Female Errors fall,
Look on her Face, and you'll forget 'em all.

Belinda has worshipfully converted nature into art, a paltry and temporary human body into a sacrosanct image. The poem, consequently, is about the combativeness of images and their vicissitudes. Images are fragile yet tyrannical. Belinda's curls are manacles, not only to the men they are intended to ensnare but to Belinda herself, who must enslave herself to tending, crimping and defending them. The coquette's profession is an anchoritic, self-denying one. In the course of duty she suffers torments as grievous as those reserved for penitential religious ecstasy:

For this your Locks in Paper-Durance bound
For this with Tort'ring Irons wreath'd around?

Her ultimate sacrifice is to accept the dissevering of the lock, because it guards the image from the putrefaction to which humanity is haplessly subject. The poem ends with an aesthetic variant of Milton's fortunate fall. The crime against nature guarantees immortality not of the soul, as in Milton's paradise within, but of the image.

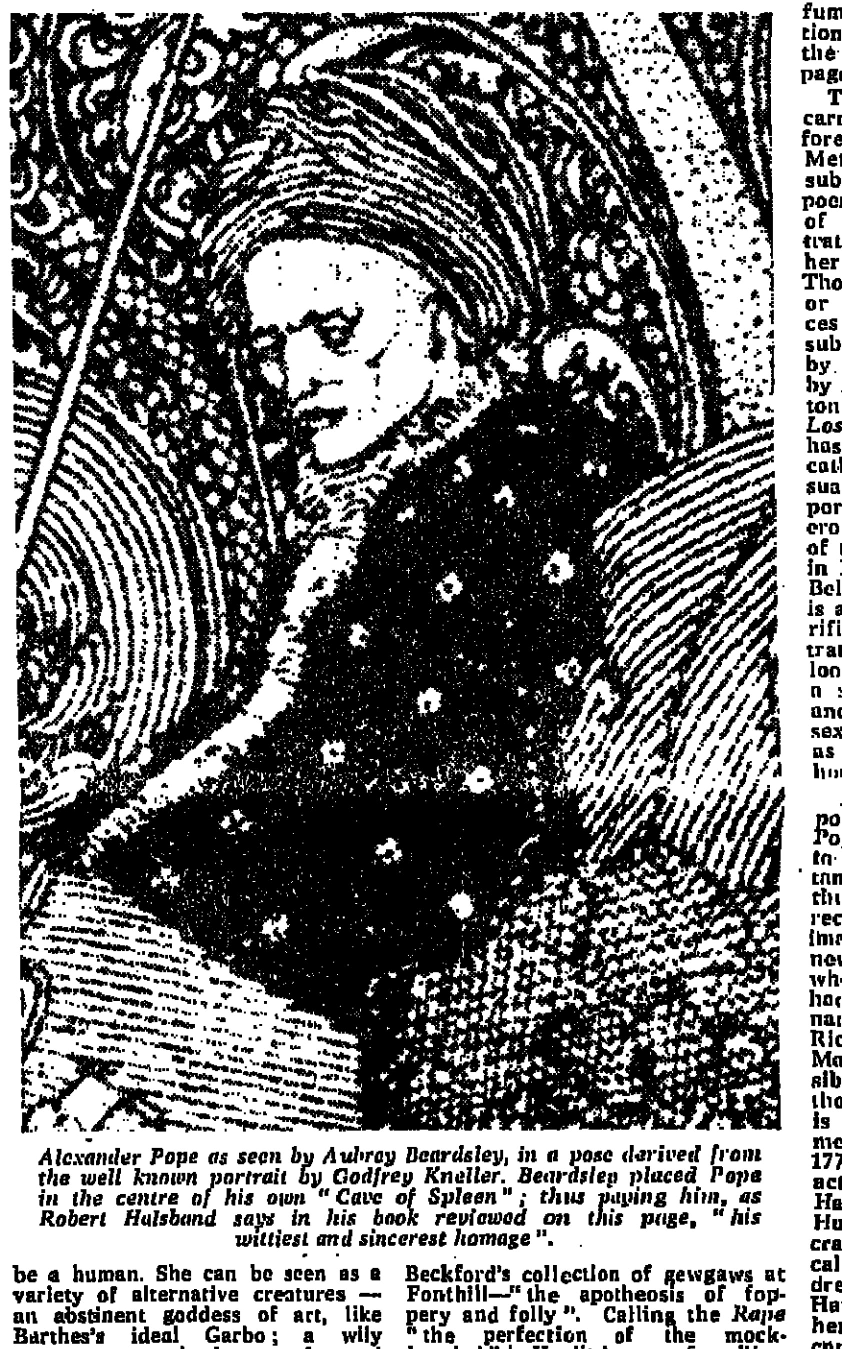
Images in the poem are weaponry, like those pearl bullets in Webster. During the card game, the players deploy emblems which Pope metaphorically animates ("An Ace of Hearts steps forth"). But the images turn against those who misuse them, and in the final battle a beau dies in metaphor, impaled on his own oxymoron ("A Living Death I bear"). The cave of spleen is a limbo of deformed images, a place of visual miscegenation, populated by those ghastly hybrids which are the graphic ammunition of satirists like Gillray—vivified teapots, and mutant female bottles agitating to be corked.

This sovereignty of the image alters the poem's mock-heroism, and turns what look like anomalies into equations. Crude readings find a bathetic lapse in the transition from taking counsel to taking tea, or in the undiscriminating gossip at Hampton, but in this society tea-drinking is as circumspect, as ceremonious, as intrigue-ridden and as political as a council meeting (Pope himself was allegedly unable to take a cup of tea without a stratagem), and the Queen and the Indian screen are rhymed not derisively but so as to imply a logical similarity: the courtiers in praising "the Glory of the *British Queen*" are assessing royalty as a decorative artifice, an item in the furniture of statecraft but safely lacking power. Bagehot later called the monarchy, if not a screen, at least an ornamental, otiose façade, shielding the grubby actuality of politics.

The poem also needs illustration because it needs interpretation. Pope himself is its first, tentative interpreter. Since the sylphs are responsible for human actions, he assumes motives and causes to be imputed not intrinsic. Just as Belinda is provided with her dreams by an officious sylph and has her blushes assisted and her airs inspired by these supernatural panders, so her emotions are not home-grown but assigned to her:

And dwell such Rage in softest Bosoms then?
And lodge such daring Souls in Little Men?

The rage is sent to dwell there, the souls are lodged with the little men rather than belonging inside them.



Alexander Pope as seen by Aubrey Beardsley, in a pose derived from the well known portrait by Godfrey Kneller. Beardsley placed Pope in the centre of his own "Cave of Spleen"; thus paying him, as Robert Halsband says in his book reviewed on this page, "his wittiest and sincerest homage".

Likewise, Pope adduces Homer's anthropomorphic gods as a prototype of his own art:

So when bold *Homer* makes the Gods engage,
And heav'nly Breasts with human Passions rage.

Homer imputes emotion and humanity to these divine monsters; so does Pope to the artifact which is Belinda. But he's not concerned with humanity, which is perfunctorily relegated to the grave at the poem's end. He is merely experimenting with an interpretation of her antics by imagining her (as Homer did with the Olympians) to be a human. She can be seen as a variety of alternative creatures — an abstinent goddess of art, like Barthes's ideal Garbo; a wily coquette expert in the arts of sexual decoy; a self-dramatizing victim of the poem's mock-heroism, petulantly inflating her own "trivial causes" into "dire events". Pope, inside the poem, doesn't need to decide which she is. He leaves that to the interpreters who take over from him—and this, since the poem is so visual a work, means his illustrators, whose efforts Robert Halsband has collated.

Contrary to the usual assumption, a classic is not a work which is immutable. Rather it's a work with an aptness for metamorphosis, for adjusting itself to new minds and new ages, for serving purposes which its first creator couldn't have suspected. And thanks to Halsband's scholarship we can study this process of regenerative misinterpretation at work on *The Rape of the Lock*.

I have said that the poem is about the vicissitudes of images, which in the course of its action are sought, maimed, bandied about and at last translated to the safety of heaven, as if to a museum. Iconography too, narrates the picaresque careers of images. Since its concern is always refraction—the re-routing of a received subject through a novel perception—iconography is analogous to good criticism, which keeps works alive and confers classic status on them by altering, deforming, even defaming them. Some of the evidence Halsband has assembled suggests that defamation can indeed be as revelatory as criticism: two examples are Hazlitt's denigration of the *Rape* as filigree fancywork, and Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe's caricature, turning Belinda's dream into a version of the scatological nightmare painted by another of the *Rape*'s illustrators, Fuseli. In travestying the poem, they are conferring new powers, new relevances, on it, Sharpe changing it into a work about sexual neurosis and the libidinous monsters released by the sleep of reason, Hazlitt aligning it in opposition to his own romantic aesthetic of gustatory virility and discovering in it —as he did in the insipid heroes of contemporary romance or in Beckford's collection of gewgaws at Fonthill—"the apotheosis of foppery and folly". Calling the *Rape* "the perfection of the mock-heroic!" is Hazlitt's way of reviling it. Pope mocks the heroic, Hazlitt implies, because he doesn't believe in it. Hazlitt himself venerates heroism—the feisty vitality of the prize-fighters he cheered, the adventuring Napoleon, the righteous pleasure he himself derived from hating—and the *Rape* is for him a gauzy, spangly, epicene libel on those heroic possibilities.

Hazlitt dismisses the poem because of its littleness. But later in the century, miniaturization becomes one of its decadent virtues. Hazlitt called it "the triumph of insignificance". For Wilde and Beardsley, however, the poem is conducting a subversive campaign against prosaic significance and adult responsibilities. So one of the most important things about Beardsley's illustrative version of the poem was the mere fact of its size: in 1897 he sponsored a pocket edition, five and half inches by four, for which his pictures were "reduced to well-nigh postage stamps", contracting the object to fit what he saw as Pope's fetishistic diminution. Hazlitt despised the decorative arts because of their small scale. He could find in them none of the kinesis and appetitive sensuality which for him were the glory of painting and literature. This is why it is sufficient for him to exclude the *Rape* from classic status by associating it with gauze or filigree or spangles. But Beardsley is content to be named, on his title page, as the poem's embroiderer rather than its illustrator: the profession suits the adversary effeminacy of his artistic identity.

Pope's first illustrator, Louis Du Guernier in 1714, inaugurates the history of visual misinterpretation by ignoring the poem's ironic deflations and aggrandizing it in the graphic language of baroque. Du Guernier's architecture is epic, and he changes the poem's locales to help re-inflate the characters, who now drink tea and play cards outdoors beneath an Ionic colonnade. His furnishings have the swollen pomp of the baroque—the drapes above Belinda's bed, the sail on her boat—and his cave of spleen is a Miltonic hell curtained with billowy fumes, confining the animistic abortions listed by Pope (the teapot and the bottles) to a corner of the page.

The baroque has to be grossly carnal: Pope's limber sylphs therefore become adipose cherubs. Metaphors too are literalized and substantialized. Ill-Nature in the poem has a bosom figuratively full of lampoons; Du Guernier's illustration, as Halsband notes, gives her a collection of them to hold. Though the baroque erects literary or architectural or pictorial edifices which strain towards religious sublimity, they are held aloft not by devotional certainty but either by fierce concentration of will (Milton in the invocation to *Paradise Lost* makes it clear that he alone has to raise and support the aerial cathedral of the poem) or by sensual delirium (the mystical transport of Bernini's St Teresa is an erotic swoon). The same founding of the sacred in the profane occurs in Du Guernier's plates. Canopied, Belinda in her bed or on the river is a figurine adored or perhaps sacrificed on an altar; but the illustrator's innuendoes make her cult look priapic—the frontispiece enrols a satyr among the chubby sylphs, and in Belinda's bedroom a chair sexily bares a leg which suggests, as Halsband comments, the cloven hoof of a satyr.

An illustrator's task with the poem is to disinter meanings which Pope has omitted or suppressed — to extrapolate from the source not tamely mimic it. Belinda has a posthumous life in the illustrations, recreating herself to satisfy the imaginative expectations of each new generation. Already by 1757, when Samuel Wale drew her, she had changed from Pope's forbidding narcissist to a contemporary of Richardson's Clarissa or Sterne's Maria, a debilitated victim of sensibility, her body drooping under the affliction of fine feeling. Wale's is a Belinda for the age of sentiment. John Hamilton Mortimer's in 1776 has become a romantic character, "a sensual temptress" as Halsband says. Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt identified creativity with the cravings of appetite, and Keats called poetry a wish-fulfilling dream: Belinda now, like Lady Hamilton in Romney's portraits of her as Medea or Ariadne, has become a libidinal romantic muse, promising to magic our fantasies into truths.

As such, she is moved out of doors. Thomas Stothard's 1798 watercolours represent the triumph of an ingenuous child of nature, whose supernatural attendants aren't sophisticated sexual go-betweens but the thronging lepidoptera of romantic nature. The radiance of Stothard's colour dissolves the boat's mast and rigging. Instead, a cloud of winged sylphs hovers above Belinda, like an image of her own volatile, vagrant fancy. Stothard equipped the sylphs with butterfly wings, which he painted from a peacock butterfly he caught in the fields. Pope's worldly angels are thus parabolically restored to nature. Stothard's filmy moths contrast with the mean, satiric insects of Fuseli, which swarm through his version of Belinda's dream. Fuseli was imaginatively obsessed by the insects he studied because they were a malign, pullulating lower life, a predatory parody of the human beings they vexed; he too wants to sting, prickle, irritate and poison. Stothard, like Blake or Sterne with the fly, admires insects for a different reason: scarcely visible but vibrating with life, they are not only members but symbols of the sensorium of romantic nature.

Fuseli considered the sylphs to be Pope's single claim to romantic creativity. "A Poet", he declared, "is an inventor; and what has

Pope invented, except the sylphs?" The realm of invention is for Fuseli the psychological interior. Hence his ambition to paint dreams, and his image of Belinda becalmed in the cave of spleen, which for him is less an asylum of satiric deformities than a mental state. The sickly green tonality of the picture and its unsteady swirling composition make it a psychoanalysis of Belinda. This introversion makes the painting (in the terms of Fuseli's aesthetics) "poetical": it paints not material objects but the ambiguous moods which previously had been reserved for literature.

Fuseli disagreed with Johnson's criticism of the *Rape*, because he sensed in it an assault on his own creative freedom. Johnson had been offended by the flimsy allegorical agents of the *Rape*, as he was by the chimerical Sin and Death of *Paradise Lost*, because they could "produce effects, but cannot *conduct* actions". Milton, recognizing the problem, put Sin and Death to work on the *solid* architecture of his universe, making them *build* the causeway, just as Du Guernier made Pope's metaphors plumply substantial; but they remain ectoplasmic and unreal, stranded between allegorical impersonation and literal truth. Again, for Johnson the *Rape* falters into absurdity because it makes human beings the playthings of phantoms. Fuseli saw in this criticism a crass mistrust of imagination. Allegory, as Fuseli redefined it, no longer needed a theological warranty from those disbanded "heathen deities" whom Johnson had declared obsolete: its veracity was psychological. In Fuseli's painting, Spleen and her cohorts are not the deputies of a religious system but embodiments of obscure mental impulses, the haunters of the unconscious, like those related personae Freud and Jung employed as allegorizations of our mental processes—rampant Id, quarrelsome Ego, censorious Super-Ego. Fuseli, defending the sylphs and painting the cave as a recess of sexual trauma, is not merely illustrating the poem. He is re-imagining it.

The Victorians domesticate the poem and make a novel of it. Belinda is defined as a reader (Eliza Sharpe, Wilson Dyer and Richard Westall show her posing with or anxiously perusing her *billet-doux*). And the poem's crises are presented as novelistic anecdotes, contrived so as to study character in reaction—in Wilson Dyer's case, the difference between Belinda's rapt scanning of the letter and the nasty inquisitiveness of her maid, surreptitiously reading over Belinda's shoulder; and in C. R. Leslie's painting, the Baron and Belinda are merely pretexts for the clusters of professional reactors surrounding them, the men (led by Sir Plume) insisting on the lock's restoration, the women affecting to console Belinda while tattling about her embarrassment. The Victorians do not so much illustrate the poem as excavate an interior of novelistic privacy which, for Pope, is simply absent. A stray phrase from the poem can be detached (or maybe liberated) from context and stretched into an anecdote. In Canto I, "the Whisper in the Dark" is casually numbered among the enemies of virtue. Thomas Uwins removed the phrase and used it to label a vignette which shows a pair of dallying lovers in a discreet arbour, with a contingent of sylphs ballooning around the woman's head like her thought-stream. The pair is "probably intended to suggest Belinda and the Baron", ventures Halsband. But not necessarily—for the Victorians, the poem exhales its characters and incidents, leaving behind only atmosphere. Uwins's couple turns away from us, disappearing into the foliage, enveloped by that inspecific ambience.

When the Victorians do try to represent Pope's characters, they fail because they make novelistic contemporaries of them. Belinda and the Baron are commandeered by Victorian historicism, which confidently assumes, as Bulwer Lytton says in *The Last Days of Pompeii*, that the human heart is in all ages and places the same, and that chronological or cultural differences are mere matters of costuming. Therefore, although the Victorians are conscientious about the historical authenticity of décor (Leslie painted his version "in the very room in Hampton Palace where he presumed the incident had occurred", and copied the furniture from the eighteenth-century collection at Petworth), they contradictorily interpret the people as their own contemporaries. Leslie's Baron is a stolid mid-Victorian, modelled after Millais; the Belinda of Colonel Seccombe (1878) is the colonel's lady, stepping on to the boat as if embarking to attend a military exercise; George Kirkby's Belinda (1875) is an affluent and over-dressed Belgravia hostess.

Halsband's survey concludes with Beardsley's appropriation of the poem which is, he concedes, "a . . . masterpiece in its own right". As an interpretation, Beardsley's is the most flagrant of all, yet also the most accurate and perceptive. Beardsley laboured to make the book itself a replica of the perverse world it contained. Physically, his edition is at once—as Wilde said all dandified art-works should be—surface and symbol. Hence the gold and turquoise luxury of the binding and its stamped design of scissors closing, like a vagina dentata, on a wriggling curl of apparently pubic hair. This decadent casing makes of it a book like one of those sacrilegious jewelled missals over which Des Esseintes pores, or a book like one of those we find inside the book, in the altar of French romances before which the Baron does obeisance.

Within the covers, Beardsley continues his vendetta against nature. Stothard had transferred the poem outdoors, but Beardsley's putative landscapes are either (in "The Toilet") patterns on a screen, or an adjunct of human finery: in the plate of the rape itself, nature outside the window has been pruned into regularity, but the brocaded costumes of the characters indoors and the vertiginous nests of their wigs resemble an entangled undergrowth, while Beardsley's cave of spleen is an asphyxiating den spun from human hair.

Fuseli saw in the poem a war behind the sexes. Beardsley however sees in it evidence of their androgynous urge to union. Hair for Fuseli is an insignia of power. The coiffures of his women look like helmets, and one of his imitators, Lady Caroline North, includes in her own illustration of the *Rape* a tonsorial parody of the poem's action, with a man conquering a woman by pulling off her wig to reveal her baldness. But in Beardsley's case this fetishism about hair has a different implication. The Baron, we suspect, wants Belinda's lock in order to wear it. Rather than desiring her, he transvestitally impersonates her. Beardsley is fascinated by hair because it sums up the paradox of his own art: it is the body's seamy extrusion (Whistler found Beardsley repellently hirsute—"hairs on his head, hairs on his fingers' ends, hairs in his ears, hairs on his toes"), but it can be woven, dressed and plaited into artifice. In its progress from barbarous coarseness to faddish refinement, hair acts out the evolution of decadent art, which takes as its subject the ugly animality of men and makes from it an aestheticism which hopes to exterminate nature.

Yet because art grows out of aesthetes' nether selves, they're always regressing: hence Dorian Gray's detours to the East End, or (the comic correlative of these truancies) Jack's illicit Bunburying; hence the tendency of James's cultivated millionaires to turn back into beasts prowling in a rapacious jungle, smashing or incinerating the art-works they pretend to covet; and hence too the relapse of Beardsley's most exquisite and elaborate designs into leering pornography. The more studiously we wreathe our hair into art, the more sordidly and greasily it brands us as beasts. Decadent art disdains and disowns human nature, but that nature in turn betrays art's presumptions.

This is the significance Beardsley discovers in *The Rape of the Lock*. The design for "The Barge" gives spatial form to the opposition. Belinda sits in the boat sedately fanning herself, seen only from the waist up. At the waist, the decorated poop of the barge takes over, but rather than prudishly obscuring Belinda's proscribed regions, this carved artifice exposes them by lewd innuendo. As Halsband says, its fretwork is an orgy of sexual imagery, with the offending organs, detached from the bodies which own and regulate them, overlapping and intromitting in polymorphous patterns—"breast-nipples, apertures vaginal or anal, and phalluses". The two halves of Beardsley's design are the tiers of the human body as decadence conceives it: the rational upper zone, the ungovernable sexual apparatus housed beneath.

Since Beardsley, Halsband points out, no one has attempted to illustrate the *Rape*. Perhaps it is a case of interpretation brilliantly ravaging and exhausting the work on which it is trained, uncovering an ulterior of meaning for which the work itself cannot be held responsible. I began by saying that the *Rape* asks for illustration; but the interpretative ambition of illustration is to show what is not in the poem. Halsband makes no such general claims for his study, but to me his book is a model of the contradictory ways in which criticism and its analogue, illustration, revivify works of art, sometimes completing them, sometimes disorienting them, sometimes even (as in Beardsley's case) brilliantly desecrating them.

Masterworks in miniature

By Tom Phillips

TIMOTHY GARRARD:

Akan Weights and the Gold Trade
393 pp. Longmans. £19.50.
0 582 64631 6

Among all the cultures of the world I cannot think of a class of object which rivals the Akan goldweight in its range of depiction, or which catalogues so abundantly the goods and preoccupations of a society. These miniature bronze-castings (often referred to as "Ashanti weights") represent, with the exception of a handful of taboo subjects (cats and owls for example) every ritual, class of person, natural phenomenon, daily task, implement, bird, animal and fish as well as a huge diversity of abstract forms and decorative motifs. Many, in addition, by illustrating proverbs embody the traditional wisdom of their society, its philosophy, history and humour.

Although generally modelled and cast by the lost-wax process Akan goldweights also include direct castings of natural objects (this is sometimes referred to as the "lost-beetle process")—grasshoppers, chicken's claws, seeds, etc. In their wit and virtuosity they make an African parallel to the *netsuke* of Japan; a parallel rather than an equivalent, in that goldweights, although rarely more than a couple of inches high or long, seldom seem to aim for the self-conscious aestheticism of the miniature. Within their scale their forms are usually broad and direct, and, unlike the true miniature which it would be absurdly self-defeating to enlarge a hundredfold, many goldweights have the characteristics of monumental sculpture: a good Akan leopard for example would, were it to be enlarged, easily outclass Landseer's lions, and some of the fine abstract weights would, in terms of form, add grandeur to the skylines of Gizeh or Chicago.

One testimony of the expandibility of African metalwork can be seen in London in the shape of a pair of Fulani ear-rings magnified a thousand times, opposite the main entrance of St Thomas's Hospital.

Until the late nineteenth century, when gold dust ceased to be the normal currency for transactions among the Akan (in what are now Ghana and the Ivory Coast), every substantial household would have had a set of such weights, the majority of which would have been of the more humdrum "geometric" types with a handful of figurative weights supplemented by serviceable oddments like seeds and perhaps a European belt-buckle. Chiefs on the other hand would have a conspicuously grander set, including many heavier examples of greater artistry: these, kept in a specially tied bag would be (and often still are) prominently displayed on ceremonial occasions.

Although goldweights have been collected by Europeans for many years for their sculptural quality, little has been known about their origins, their comparative dating or even their exact use. The literature so far (with honourable exceptions such as Menzel's *Goldgewichte aus Ghana*) has mainly consisted of uninformative picture books whose texts do little more than perpetuate standard ideas and opinions. Where they include "new research" they often merely add to the confusion by listing over-imaginative interpretations of the meaning and symbolism of goldweight designs.

No one is more wilfully gullible than the amateur field-researcher and, as any visitor to West Africa should know, it is in most areas the amiable custom to answer questions in the terms that will give the most pleasure to the questioner. As the earnest researcher leans forward to ask yet another fatally phrased question, like, "Does this spiral here perhaps represent the life-giving aspect of the Sun?", the mere instinct of hospitality evokes a smiling affirmative, and yet another decorative fiction is recorded as fact. Another trap awaits the unwary student among the elders and chiefs, for, brought up in an oral tradition, they do not always discriminate between personal and collective memory, and will often describe events that may have happened centuries earlier, as having been witnessed by them, and only patient cross-examination (such as Mr Garrard, a member of the bar both in Ghana and in England, is qualified to perform) will unravel the true order of events.

It has been Garrard's main task to separate the gold-dust of fact from the brass filings of fancy and wishful thinking. The result is this first convincing comprehensive account of the development, within the context of the gold-trade in general, of the Akan weight systems, and the first coherent attempt at a chronology of the weights. As Mr Garrard demonstrates, system supplanted system and these changes are reflected in the continual adjustment of weights by means of lead plugs or even, in figures, the removal of limbs, as can be seen in any collection. The historical framework which Garrard supplies must in itself be the most exhaustive and well-documented account of the gold-trade yet written, and, augmented as it is by equally detailed estimates of brass imports, the work is a major contribution to the general history of the goldsmith in Africa.

Garrard divides the weights into two main periods: early (1400-1700) and late (1700-1900) which will perhaps prove insufficient for the collector; indeed, stylistically there seems a strong case for a middle or classical period (encompassing one suspects most of the eighteenth century) when a high refinement had replaced the robust character of earlier weights, and before the late nineteenth century brought its baroque excesses and repetitions of motifs and figures.

(In future editions the author will also have the unpleasant task of expanding the short section on fakes. Only this year many previously unimitated types have come on the market, and there seems to be evidence that the whole business is being expertly organized, probably under European management.)

As so often happens (in our culture one thinks of the collectors of folk songs and the rescuers of English cottage-garden flowers) a burst of research was done at the last possible moment as the few survivors were dying off. The cliff-edge timing of Mr Garrard's researches was brought home to me this year when in a dusty courtyard in the Akim region, I talked with a centenarian who may well be the last living man to have used gold weights and who, though now blind and frail, was able to recall and demonstrate the precise fraud-proof grip by which the scales were suspended and to describe how one purchased one's weights. (Animals and figures that he could have bought as a boy from the goldsmith for 1s 6d or so are already fetching prices in three figures at Christie's.)

While this will no doubt remain the definitive work on the historical aspects of the subject, it leaves much unsaid about the weights themselves. One particular feature, the proverbs that so many of these bronzes illustrate, has deliberately not been tackled in depth, since the redoubtable Peggy Appiah is currently at work in Kumasi on such a compilation. There is however still room for a thorough typology of goldweights and the beginnings of a stylistic analysis. As more examples are photographed and published, individual artistic personalities start to emerge.

Unfortunately, the photographs in this book are poorly reproduced. Its excellence in all other respects however causes one to speculate what might have become of the information it contains had Mr Garrard not decided on impulse fourteen years ago, when he was a young lawyer in England, to escape the pinstripe path his profession offered at home, and had there been a different advertisement in the newspaper that day. We might be reading now his no doubt equally definitive work on Solomon Islands prow ornaments or Sarawak pig-trap charms. Certainly his researcher's diligence, his collector's passion and his lawyer's probity could hardly have lighted on a subject so rich in possibilities for study and so poor in published material, or on one that would lead him to so close an understanding of the heart of a country. There are few villages even in remoter parts of Ghana where "The Lawyer" has not sat long hours with the chief and elders after the customary libations and speeches of greeting, teasing from the memories of old men the names and functions of almost forgotten objects. As the oral tradition dies the young no longer listen to the memories of the old with the same dependence, and the Akan saying "Tete ka asom" ("Ancient things remain in the ears") does not retain the force it once had. Ghana is fortunate that in this transitional period an important part of its heritage of knowledge has fallen into such safe and responsible hands.

GEORGE ELIOT: 1880-1980
Edited by U.C. Knoepflmacher and George Levine.

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University of California Press
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Author, Author

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than Friday, November 28. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that the most nearly correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, The Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ, and marked "Author, Author" on the envelope. The solution and result will appear in our issue of December 5.

Competition No 44

1 If it was a question of an *Imperium*, he said to himself, and if one wished, as a Roman, to recover a little the sense of that, the place to do so was on London Bridge, or even, on a fine afternoon in May, at Hyde Park Corner. It was not indeed to either of those places that these grounds of his predilection, after all sufficiently vague, had, at the moment we are concerned with him, guided his steps; he had strayed, simply enough, into Bond Street, where his imagination, working at comparatively short range, caused him now and then to stop before a window in which objects massive and lumpish, in silver and gold, in the forms to which precious stones contribute, or in leather, steel, brass, applied to a hundred uses and abuses, were as tumbled together as if, in the insolence of the Empire, they had been the loot of far-off victories.

2 That it hardly was, that it all bleakly and unbeguilingly *wasn't* for "the likes" of *him*—poor decent Stamfordham—to rap out queries about the owner of the to him unknown and unsuggestive name that had, in these days, been thrust on him with such a wealth of commendatory gesture, was precisely what now, as he took, with his prepared list of New Year *colifichets* and whatever, his way to the great gaudy palace, fairly flicked his cheek with the sense of his having never before so let himself in, as he ruefully phrased it, without letting anything, by the same token, out.

"Anything" was, after all, only another name for *the* thing. But he was to ask himself what earthly good it was, anyhow, to have kept in its confinement the furred and clawed, the bristling and now all but audibly scratching domestic pet, if he himself, defenceless Lord Chamberlain that he was, had to be figured as bearing it company inside the bag. There wasn't, he felt himself blindly protesting, room in there for the two of them; and the imminent addition of a Personage fairly caused our friend to bristle in the manner of the imagined captive that had till now symbolised well enough for him his whole dim bland ignorance of the matter in hand.

3 If now, having dismissed your hired impersonators with verdicts ranging from the laudatory orchid to the disgusted and disgusting egg, you ask and, of course, notwithstanding the conscious fact of his irrevocable absence, you instinctively *do* ask for our so good, so great, so dead author to stand before the finally lowered curtain and take his shyly responsible bow for this, his latest, ripest production, it is I—my reluctance is, I can assure you, co-equal with your dismay—who will always loom thus wretchedly into your confused picture, for, in default of the all-wise, all-explaining master you would speak *to*, who else at least can, who else indeed must respond to your bewildered cry, but its very echo, the begged question you would speak to him *about*.

Competition No. 40

Winner: An exceptionally large number of correct entries, including one from Graham Greene. The first name out of the hat was Mrs S. P. Fearon, 6 West Bridge Street, Axbridge, Somerset BS26 2AD.

Answers:

All three poems occur in stories by Saki.

1 Have you heard the groan of a gravelled grouse,
Or the snarl of a snaffled snail
(Husband or mother, like me, or spouse),
Have you lain a-creep in the darkened house
Where the wounded wombats wail?
—"Reginald's Rubaiyat"

2 Cease, War, thy bubbling madness that the wine shares,
And bid thy legions turn their swords to mine shares.
—"Reginald's Peace Poem" (to mark the end of the Boer War—"mine shares seem to fit the case better than ploughshares")

3 A Mouse that prayed for Allah's aid
Blasphemed when no such aid befell:
A cat, who feasted on that mouse,
Thought Allah managed vastly well.
Pray not for aid to One who made
A set of never-changing Laws,
But in your need remember well
He gave you speed, or guile—or claws.
—"For the Duration of the War"

Information please

Alfred Sutro (1873-1933), English playwright and translator of Maeterlinck: information and documents of any kind (letters, MSS, etc) by or relating to him, for a biographical/critical study.
Lewis Sawin.
Department of English, Campus Box 226, University of Colorado at Boulder, Boulder, Colorado 80309.

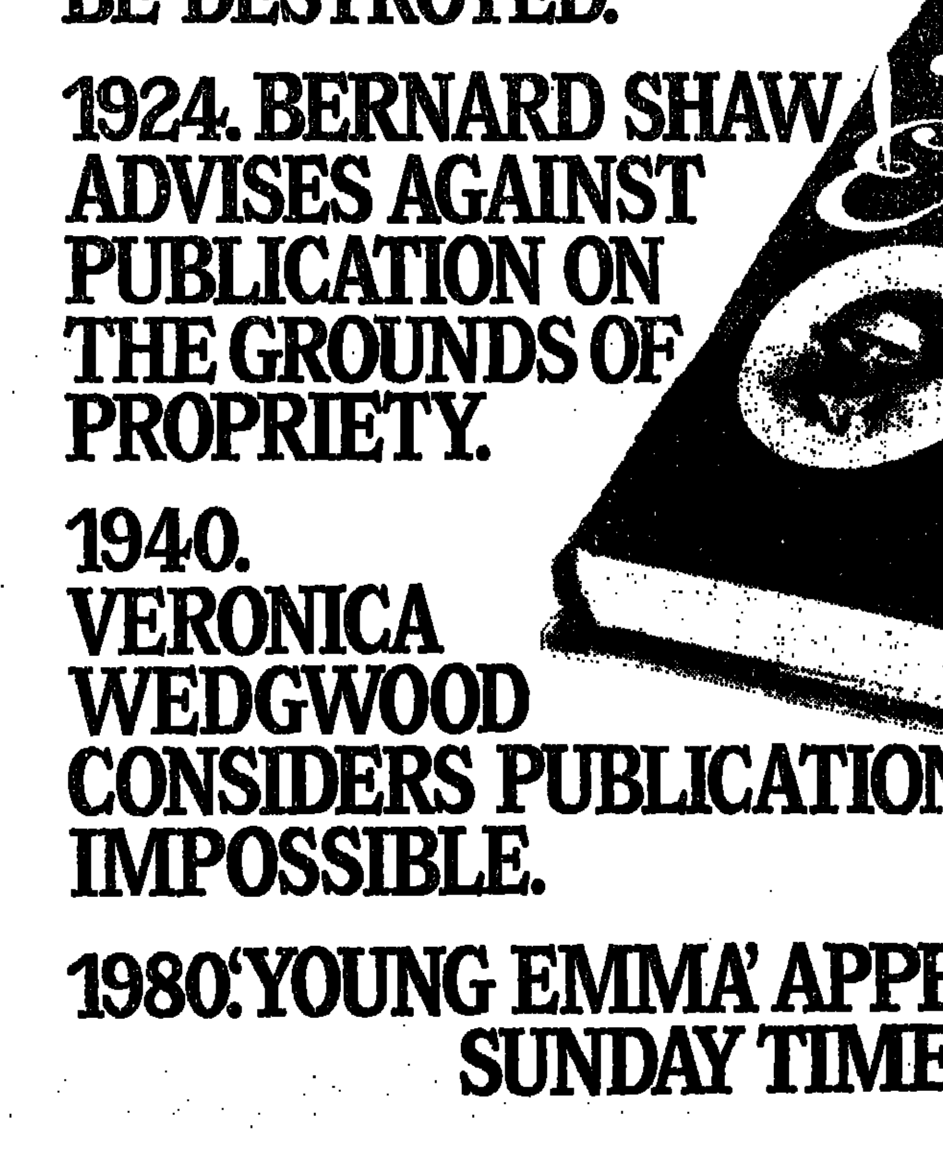
President Eduard Benes: information on his years in Britain (1939-45), particularly from anyone who knew him personally and visited his places of work in London and Aston Abbotts.
Jonathan Smith.
79 The Ridgeway, Tonbridge, Kent.

Patrick Carleton, a writer of the 1930s, who appeared to be a native of Derbyshire, and wrote non-fiction and fiction, including a masterful revisionist historical work (1938) about Richard III entitled *Under the Hog*: any biographical information, for a study of writers of the 1930s.
Charles Burdick and Louis Bisceglia.
Department of History, San Jose State University, San Jose, California 95192.

Expatriate Australian authors in England c 1900-50: any documents, personal reminiscences, correspondence with H. H. Richardson, Martin Boyd, Frederic Manning, P. R. Stephenson, the Palmers, Norman Lindsay and Keith Hancock.
Helene Mitchell,
17 Hyde Vale, London SE10.

John Gawsworth (1912-1970), real name Terence Ian Fytton Armstrong: he wrote or edited dozens of books, was a poet, lecturer and bookman, and edited many magazines including *The Poetry Review*, *English Digest*, *Enquiry* and *Literary Digest*; was associated with Victorian writers Arthur Machen and M. P. Shiel, and later figures such as Roy Campbell, Lawrence Durrell, Hugh MacDiarmid, Edith Sitwell and Richard Aldington; also received much publicity as the whimsical King of Redonda, a Caribbean Island he had inherited from M. P. Shiel but never visited. He created many "Dukes" in this legendary kingdom, some of them quite famous. Any biographical or literary information about Gawsworth, for a "memoir-study".
Steve Eng.
The Romantist, PO Box 60072, Nashville, Tennessee 37205.

John Russell Pope (1874-1937), American architect of many international projects, including in London "The World's Finest Sculpture Gallery" for the Tate, the addition to the British Museum for the Elgin Marbles, and the United States government offices: his huge, meticulously kept volumes of papers were dispersed at his death. Any information about Pope, especially from those who knew him; also documented support or criticism concerning the commissioning of a foreigner for the first two projects mentioned above.
Vincent Smith.
76 Spring Street, Newport, Rhode Island 02840.



1920. THE AUTHOR DEMANDS THAT THE MANUSCRIPT OF 'YOUNG EMMA' BE DESTROYED.

1924. BERNARD SHAW ADVISES AGAINST PUBLICATION ON THE GROUNDS OF PROPRIETY.

1940. VERONICA WEDGWOOD CONSIDERS PUBLICATION IMPOSSIBLE.

1980. 'YOUNG EMMA' APPEARS IN THE SUNDAY TIMES.

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Jonathan Cape

commentary

Crossing the threshold

By Valentine Cunningham

Pasmore
BBC TV

David Storey's *Pasmore* (1972) is one of those novels ready packaged, bricoliaged you might even say, for the movie scriptwriter. Its construction—its curt little scenes, its tersely short-winded conversations, its actions sharply cross-cut to keep the interest high—is pure cinematic Lego. So Richard Eyre didn't meet all that much textual resistance as he wrote and directed the television screenplay (October 21). Repeatedly, movie glove settled snugly onto fiction hand, meta-text patly upon text Much of the dialogue, for instance, is straight Storey. Again and again Eyre neatly fields those moments that make Storey's telling account of a marriage smash-up (it begins with Pasmore shacking up with one of his evening-class pupils) simultaneously so riveting and so repellent.

Especially good and gutsy are the attendant violences, the unashamed shouting down private and public telephones, the wailing of deserted children ("Daddy, when are you coming home, Daddy?"), irate husband sweeping wifely crockery to the floor, grizzled grandfather clacking his fecklessly embourgeoisé and southernized son, leathered tough (looking startlingly like the poet Craig Raine) putting a hired boot into Pasmore on behalf of the husband he is wronging. Like the novel, the film comes strong on grief, particularly the anguish of the wife Pasmore ditches (howling as she coils foetally in her wincyette nightie across the neglectedly rumpled marital bed), and of his nice, ordinary mum and dad from some mining village up north ("Don't you love the children, Colin?"). Everyone suffers, including in the end—and one is gladdened by both novel and film to learn it—Pasmore himself. Self-centred, self-righteous, self-pitying, a great taker ("You've really given me nothing", "You've never given me anything", he whines to benefactors, family and friends), Pasmore is made at last to take some notice of others' needs. How cheeringly, too, his wife toughens up (changes the locks, gets a lover, copes) as her husband's aloof self-possessedness crumbles feebly and finally caves in altogether.

The film ends by puzzling one rather over why Pasmore's spouse actually lets him limp back home. It doesn't mention the sabbatical leave from college teaching that frames the novel's dealings with Pasmore's defection and finally demands an end of his unfestive comedy. Unfaithfully, too, Nat Crosby's superb camera-work prettifies too much. Sex with the mistress comes misted over with a lushly enticing haze. (Inevitably, the reunion of Mr and Mrs Pasmore gets the same drooling sepia.) The director himself has dreamed up a gratuitous but nonetheless stunningly handsome clapboard seaside cottage for Mr and Mrs P to do a bit of their quarrelling in. In fact, Pasmore's always sunlit London house, his small and beautiful daughters, not to mention his smashing wife (engagingly played by Alison Steadman: memorably fetching in her pink towelling track suit), are made to look so attractive that only a loony would think for a moment of chucking them up.

The film keeps seeking a gloriously photogenic colour and light. The pastoral holiday from domestic normalities that the novel allows Pasmore speedily degenerates into an enclosed, darkly curtained, Kafkan hellishness. Roomed in his sabbatical hidey-hole, Pasmore quickly finds himself marooned. His deliberate shutting out of quotidian existence is nightmarishly played off against the horrific shutting-in it becomes. This concern of the novel with difficult thresholds Richard Eyre translates and in effect enlargingly glosses into a continual set of enclosing and distorting frames—mirrors (one of them cracking Pasmore's face into an early Picasso, nose and eye awry), reflecting picture glass, windows, doorways. Framed, contained, shut aloofly off, Pasmore and his wife, Pasmore and his parents and sister, Pasmore and his wife's lover, repeatedly confront each other and their mirrored and mirroring selves across the troubled and troubling liminalities that yawn between them. And quite unlike in the novel, the divided parties are thus granted a terrific, and always cherishingly photographed, visibility. Seen this way, Pasmore's domestic plight read as altogether less final: as something that, after all, need not wait for the end of any sabbatical term for its solution.

A new game, the old rules

By Thomas Pakenham

Breaker Morant
Gate 3 Cinema, Camden

At dawn on February 27, 1902, a few days before the start of negotiations to end the Boer War, two British officers were executed in Pretoria Gaol by a firing squad of Cameron Highlanders. They were the only British officers (as opposed to fifty-one Afrikaner rebels) executed by the British in the war. And they were both Australian: two hard-riding lieutenants, Harry ("Breaker") Morant and Peter Handcock, commissioned the year before in an irregular Australian-led corps called the BVCs, the Bushveldt Carbineers. They had been court martialled for murdering twelve people during mopping-up operations near Pietersburg, in wild country 200 miles north of Pretoria. Eight of their victims were surrendered Boers who had come in voluntarily under the white flag. Morant and Handcock admitted most of the killings. Their defence was that in the guerrilla war the game had new rules.

Out of this gruesome little tragedy two of their compatriots, Matt Carroll, the producer, and Bruce Beresford, the director, have made an excellent film, a masterpiece of high drama and low budget. In Australia it has been acclaimed as the film of the year. Edward Woodward plays the Breaker as Australians yearn to believe he was: an English black sheep escaped to Australia, a colonial Byron or Barry Lyndon, breaker of horses and hearts, folk-hero and, of course, scapegoat, a poor Aussie sacrificed to save the corrupt British officer class from exposure and to appease the pro Boer lobby in England and on the Continent.

After seeing the film I went to our space-age Palace of History—the new computerized Public Record Office at Kew—to look up the confidential Boer War files. "You're not asking about that film, are you?" said the friendly android, before I had even tried to type the file number into the green-faced computer terminal. "We've had inquiries about that the whole week, and the court martials aren't here." But I found what I wanted. The courts martial are no secret. They were made public in 1902 by Morant's Australian champions. What have remained unpublished are the comments of the British Cabinet. In the War Office *Secret Miscellany* files I found the exchange of cipher cables between Lord Kitchener (C-in-C at Pretoria) and Brodrick (British War Minister). These make it quite clear that no political pressure was brought to bear on Kitchener by the Cabinet. The pressure was all the other way. Kitchener was furious at the lawlessness of his own army—especially the colonials in it—and got permission to polish off two offending officers to encourage the others.

In one sense, then, they were scapegoats. There is a moment in the film when Major Thomas, Defence Counsel, pleads that "this is a new kind of war, a new kind of war for the century", a guerrilla war in which no quarter is given on either side. He claims that the word had gone out unofficially from GHQ that no prisoners were to be taken. In the film, Morant scorns this kind of extenuation. He refuses to draw the line. "The only rule we went by was gun-law. Rule .303." Probably many of Kitchener's men talked like this among themselves, though they were more discreet than Morant. It was to Kitchener's credit that he tried to stop them acting like it.

However, the film does the Breaker proud. In real life, just before they shut him, he scribbled some cavalier verses: "Let's toss a bumper down our throat/Before we pass to heaven." In the film he adds: "We poets crave immortality." Now they talk of digging him up in Pretoria and giving him a hero's grave in Australia. It would be like putting Dick Turpin in Westminster Abbey, or Lieutenant Calley in Arlington Cemetery.

Something nasty in the hamburger

By Rosemary Dinnage

Three plays by Dennis Potter
London Weekend TV

In Dennis Potter's banned television play, *Brimstone and Treacle*, the satanic central character turns to the audience just before he rapes a paralysed, brain-damaged girl, and chants:

If you are a nervous type out there,
Switch over or off for cleaner air.
But you have to be very smug or frail
To believe that no man has a horn or a tail.

It is not ordinary horniness that he is accusing his television audience of being afraid to face, but the full set of horns, tail and cloven hoof. Potter's obsession with sadism, disgust and corruption has become so single-minded that it demands a high level of art and integrity to justify it. Do the three new plays shown over recent weeks really have it?

Blade on the Feather is the most superficially entertaining, unashamedly drawing on a whole collection of effective Gothic cinematic clichés—stranger arriving at sinister house in thunderstorm, tensions over long glossy dining-table, shots and screams in tunnel—to compose an image of rottenness into which Potter has put his whole heart. "A big black fly", murmurs Donald Pleasence, retired Oxbridge don and spymaster, as he drifts through evil dreams in his sunlit deckchair; he himself is a fly ready for the squashing, but the big one, the one that feeds on shit and lays its eggs in rotten food, is gentle, velvet-voiced young Tom Conti, who has come to rub him out.

Potter demands of us the mental agility we have learned from Le Carré and his like (I don't think it would have been manageable in the Agatha Christie days, any more than the under-four-minute mile); so, Conti is not after all just an avenger of his father's communist-inspired murder, but himself an Eton-and-Harrow communist of the deepest dye, flippantly disposing of Pleasence because the old man has a grain of remorse left and may spill the beans. Though the play's identification of Old Etonian decadence with Leftist treachery is unconvincing (if nursery puddings, Tolkienian fantasy and public school cuddles are anything to do with politics at all, they are slightly more identifiable with the Right), it might have been less if Pleasence had not made a splendid Gothic extravaganza of his own out of the don's part. A silky and impassive Gielgud would have been more convincing, though less in key with the quirkiness of the play.

Blade on the Feather does bustle about visually and intellectually, and provoke argument; *Rain on the Roof* is not much more than the averagely good television play featuring voyeurism, adultery and sudden bloody death. This time, Cheryl Campbell and Malcolm Stoddard as the viciously bored young couple represent corruption, and Ewan Stewart embodies a kind of innocence which—since this is a Potter play—turns out to be blindly murderous, as was the epileptic tramp's in *Pennies from Heaven*. Ewan Stewart has a spirited go at playing the kind of *Cold Comfort Farm* yokel you would have to look hard to find today, especially in the Home Counties from which husband Stoddard presumably commutes; but would the pimply lad really have so aroused beautiful Cheryl Campbell's lust?

In *Cream in my Coffee*, Potter has subdued his obsessions and affectations and given us an altogether simpler and more conventional play that depends on solid acting by the four principals. His portrayal of young love is only set up, of course, to prepare us for its transformation into elderly married hatred; but it is a play with some heart and credibility—as well as those 1930s dance-tunes. I have heard it argued that Potter loved the pretty tunes he built *Pennies from Heaven* around; I think he hates them, because they are harmless and vacuous and bright, like the wife in *Cream in my Coffee*.

Potter has a tremendous investment in defilement, which usually means defilement of women. In *Pennies from Heaven*, the whole emotional weight of the story was placed on the transformation of spotlessly innocent virgin into gravelly prostitute. The most dramatically telling scene in *Blade in the Feather* is the one in which Tom Conti, having been to bed with the don's pretty daughter, tells her a very deliberate story of a man and a pile of garbage and a greasy hamburger, ending (roughly): "*I* was the man. And the garbage, the etcetera, the stale greasy hamburger"—cheery smile of adieu—"was you". The mainspring of *Cream in my Coffee* is the accurately rendered verbal torture of elderly wife by elderly husband, and the image the husband produces—again in a deliberate and effective passage—of an old woman kissing a dead, decayed cat on the mouth and then throwing it away. A writer has no duty to sanitize his imagination; if defilement is what Potter most wants to write about, write about it he should. But, without being smug or frail, we do not have to like the taste of greasy hamburger.

Two outstanding short novels from
Duckworth...

WINTER GARDEN
by Beryl Bainbridge
'The literary equivalent of perfect pitch'—BBC TV

THE BIRDS OF THE AIR
by Alice Thomas Ellis
'A bravura performance'—*Spectator*

Vita brevis? brevis est. Addunt 'ars longa': sed artem,
ut puto, quam longam quis ferat, est brevior.
(Life's short, you say, art long? 'Tis true, I s'ppose.
Certes life's too short to wade through reams of prose.)

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commentary

Seeing Pissarro whole

y John House

pressionism
yward Gallery

ICHARD BRETTELL,
HRISTOPHER LLOYD:
A Catalogue of the Drawings by Camille Pissarro in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
225pp. plus 378 black and white illustrations. Oxford University Press. £40.
0 19 817357 1

RALPH E. SHIKES AND PAULA HARPER:
Pissarro
His Life and Work
362pp. Quartet Books. £19.95.
0 7043 2257 9

Pissarro's art presents an immediate problem: more than any other artist of his stature, he changed his style and working methods in response to his latest artistic encounters and relationships. But we are not simply dealing with a painter who was a born follower: he played a major role in forging all these styles, and was at the centre of the theoretical debates surrounding them. Moreover, his colleagues throughout his career hailed him as a great teacher.

This remarkable succession of styles in the work of the oldest of the Impressionists (he was born in 1830) needs to be spelt out, step by step. In 1866-8 he was a pioneer of a monumental landscape painting which in a way synthesized Courbet and Daubigny, extracting strong and direct images from the domesticated landscapes of the Ile de France. In this guise he was hailed in 1868 by Zola as the most characteristic of the "Naturalists". Working in close company with Monet, Sisley and Renoir around Louveciennes in 1869-70, he adopted a more broken handling, re-creating nature's textures and nuances in mobile, ever-varied touches of colour. In these two years, as we are now beginning to realize, Louveciennes was the real birthplace of Impressionism.

Pissarro's relationship with Cézanne is the key to his development in the 1870s, first in his readoption of the palette knife, around 1875 in his search for simpler, more integrated paint surfaces, and then, from late 1876, in the evolution of a delicate, almost woven style; here, clusters of small strokes, often running parallel to each other, suggest natural textures and the play of coloured light whilst giving the image an internal order and homogeneity. Pissarro was not simply following Cézanne at this point: indeed, his "woven" style emerged a year or two before Cézanne's so-called "constructive stroke", the comparable development in his art. In the same years, Pissarro's monumentalized peasant images begin to take up the mantle of Millet and to give his landscapes a more overt social dimension.

Camille Pissarro by Lucien Pissarro: a chalk drawing of 1890 from the exhibition reviewed here.

In 1886 Pissarro was again in the vanguard, adopting the pointillist execution initiated by Seurat (twenty-nine years Pissarro's junior) as a means of systematizing his analysis of light and colour. For two years Pissarro was Neo-Impressionism's most ardent apologist. However, he soon abandoned the rigours of this style, and between 1888 and 1898 focused more fully on the question of social art, exploring the possibilities of using painting to express his anarchist philosophy—a central issue in artistic debates during those years. His final style, a sort of modified, harmonized Impressionism, brought him nearer to past associates such as Monet, but at a point when Monet's own art had gained a fresh relevance for avant-garde painting.

Pioneer or parasite? Creator or chameleon? Even Pissarro's friends could not make up their minds. Cézanne regretted the changes, feeling that "if Pissarro had continued to paint the way he did in 1870, he would have surpassed all of us"; but he went to his grave calling himself "pupil of Pissarro". Gauguin, another former pupil, was harsher in 1892: "You see what happened to Pissarro; because he always wants to be in the vanguard, abreast of everything, he has lost every atom of personality and his whole work lacks unity. He has always followed the movement from Courbet and Millet up to those petty young chemists who pile up little dots." Ten years later, though, Gauguin could afford to be more generous:

> If the whole of Pissarro's work is examined, we find there, in spite of fluctuations, not only a strong and uncompromised artistic will, but also an essentially intuitive, pure-bred art. However far off a corn-stack, over there on the hill, Pissarro makes a point of studying it from all round. He looked at everybody, they say! But why not? Everyone has looked at him, too, but has denied him. He was one of my masters and I do not deny him.

Even Pissarro's son Lucien sensed the problem raised by his father's changes of direction, and wrote to him in 1903, the last year of his life, after looking over a selection of paintings from his whole career:

> It is astonishing how everything holds together. The first paintings, the series from Pontoise, the systematic Divisionist canvases and the recent work, when one sees them together, form a whole and do not seem to me as divergent as I had imagined they would. In whatever technique and under whatever influence they were done, they always preserve that search for related values (*valeurs rapprochées*) which is, at base, the great characteristic of your art.

For such a painter, a retrospective exhibition is the great test. His work is broadly familiar, from groups of paintings, many very fine, in museums, and from his regular appearance in the auction rooms with paintings often far less resolved.

But if we shared Lucien's fears about how the ensemble might seem viewed as a whole, the exhibition at the Hayward at once allays them. From our first encounter with the brooding presence of "The Banks of the Marne in Winter" of 1866 from Chicago, through to the animated panoramas of the late cityscapes, Pissarro claims the full attention of eye and mind. The selection has been made with great skill and discrimination by an international committee (Françoise Cachin and Anne Distel from the Musée d'Orsay, Christopher Lloyd from the Ashmolean, and Barbara Stern Shapiro and John Walsh Jnr from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) and the spacious hanging allows the paintings to breathe beneath the insistent scaffold of the Hayward ceilings. Drawings and prints are happily hung apart, allowing the oils to be more fully lit. The interpenetrating spaces of the Hayward installation cope excellently with the discontinuity of Pissarro's styles and techniques, bringing together groups of related paintings without sealing them off from what came before and after them. This arrangement itself helps to articulate Pissarro's development, stage by stage. Only at two points do crucial moments fail to emerge with due emphasis: the Louveciennes phase of 1869-70 is represented only by two small, though beautiful, paintings hung in the corner of a space devoted to the similar though more confident work of 1871-3; and there are none of the almost visionary country scenes—peasants and bathers—of the early to mid-1890s.

The show turns out to be the perfect vehicle for Pissarro. Here his art can emerge without the constant juxtaposition of the more demonstrative skills of his Impressionist colleagues, by whom he is always surrounded in museums. He was not such a natural manipulator of paint as Renoir, nor so spectacular a colourist as Monet, and he could not, like Cézanne, use a single colour-relationship to distil the intensity of his experiences. But these comparisons are in no sense meant to belittle Pissarro: his strengths are quieter and less immediately accessible, lying more in the ensemble of each painting than in the virtuosity or intensity of its parts. From start to finish of his career, the inner coherence of his paintings seems Pissarro's central concern, whatever his style of the moment—it is there in the grandly articulated blocks that make up the majestic "L'Hermitage at Pontoise" of 1867 from Cologne, as it is in the flickering particles of intense colour of the late 1880s, seen in "The Gleaners" from Basle. Lucien's pinpointing in 1903 of the "search for *valeurs rapprochées*" seems a very acute comment.

In a letter of 1890 to his niece, Esther, Pissarro tried to define his underlying aims as an artist: "Art is the expression of thought [la pensée] but most of all of the *sensation*. I began to understand my *sensations*, to know what I wanted, around the age of forty, but only vaguely; at fifty, that is in 1880, I formulated the idea of unity, but without being able to render it; now, at sixty, I am beginning to see how to render it." This account brings out the importance of the ensemble within Pissarro's paintings, but it also suggests something further—that he saw a real continuity in his evolution between 1870 and 1890, in the gradual ordering of his *sensations* by his "idea of unity".

But does this continuity appear? Clearly not in terms of a consistent stylistic development. A clue may lie in an interview of 1892. Explaining why he had come to execute his finished landscapes in the studio, Pissarro continued: "The unity which the human spirit gives to vision can only be found in the studio. It is here that our impressions—previously scattered—are coordinated, and give to each other their reciprocal value, in order to create the true poem of the countryside." The quest, then, was not just for a pictorial unity, but for a broader level of meaning, for the "true poem of the countryside", and Pissarro's techniques are at the service of this quest.

By 1892 he held a clearly articulated Utopian-Anarchist belief in the need for a return to the soil as a means of restoring cohesion, justice and equality to society. His peasant pictures of these years show figures working and dwelling in harmony with the land. This integration is not expressed by his subjects alone but also by the close-knit web of colours and brush-strokes which unify the canvases. By contrast, the handling and forms which he adopted for his urban scenes later in the decade themselves emphasize the more staccato rhythms of urban existence. Throughout his career Pissarro had always chosen subjects moulded by man—villages, agricultural countryside, suburbs and cities. Landscape for him was primarily social, not elemental, atmospheric or structural as it was for colleagues such as Monet or Cézanne. Figures and buildings give Pissarro's scenes an essential human dimension: there is not one "pure" landscape in the exhibition.

The unity he was seeking does not, then, merely lie in his brushwork and colour. He was after pictorial means of expressing the relationships which he saw within his subjects, the harmonies or disjunctions of the various facets of life he treated. His methods and techniques might change as he restlessly sought richer means of conveying these relationships; but the basic quest was, as this splendid exhibition reveals, consistent—to make an essentially social art, which could express the interplay between man and his surroundings.

The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford has a unique Pissarro collection—paintings, drawings, prints and documents, almost all from the collection of Lucien, his oldest son and the recipient of his more important letters. A documentary exhibition, mainly of material from his collection, is on show at the Ashmolean until January 4, and the drawings

Oxford University Press

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commentary

nearly 400 of them, are fully catalogued and illustrated in *Catalogue of the Drawings by Camille Pissarro in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*, by Richard Brettell and Christopher Lloyd. The authors face up to the many problems of such a diverse body of material—to questions of medium, of the various functions of the drawings, as well as to their stylistic development and putative dating. Moreover, a heroic attempt has been made to reconstruct many of Pissarro's sketchbooks, now sadly dismembered. This volume, like the Hayward exhibition, with its section of drawings and its exemplary selection of prints, quite rightly stress the importance of Pissarro's graphic activity in the overall understanding of his art. The complexities of his creative process, particularly after around 1880, are now becoming more fully apparent.

Many of the detailed conclusions of the Ashmolean Drawings catalogue are clearly valid, most of the rest very plausible. Problems only arise when Pissarro's achievement as a draughtsman is set in a broader context. As the authors comment, "the absence of any systematic study of French landscape drawings of the mid-nineteenth century makes generalizations about Pissarro's own development between 1855-69 difficult", and the same difficulties recur at many other points. In our present state of ignorance, it is a pity that they have felt the need, on many occasions, to underline the significance of their material by comparisons so generalized that they threaten to obscure the immediate significance of the drawings in question.

A new and substantial biography has also appeared, *Pissarro, his Life and Work*, by Ralph E. Shikes and Paula Harper. In many respects this updates our detailed knowledge of Pissarro's life, particularly for his earlier years; it is the first biography to be able to draw on the mass of papers in the 1975 sale and on other documents which have recently become available. As such it is to be welcomed, and its account is generally accurate in detail, though the authors have certain blind spots, notably in French geography. One is startled, for instance, to encounter Louveciennes, west of Paris and in 1869 firmly in the country, as "the middle-class suburb south of Paris on the road to Versailles". The geography of Impressionism is too important a subject to be treated so casually.

But this biography raises a more basic question: is it a biography we need for Pissarro, or indeed for any painter whose life is primarily interesting in so far as it illuminates his art? For some biographers, the psychological insights offered by a life story provide their own new dimension in the understanding of an artist's work, and at times Shikes and Harper assume the mantle of psychologists. Anyone who, from the book's title, hopes for any material analysis of Pissarro's art will not find it here; occasional and rarely focused discussions of his work are relegated far behind the amply documented chronicle.

In a way, of course, it is right that the missing artistic reassessment has not appeared before the present exhibition, for exhibitions of this sort illuminate so many perspectives which can never be sensed when paintings are viewed piecemeal. A reviewer, writing as an exhibition opens, cannot see what will emerge as he studies it at leisure; but he can stress the quality of the paintings and the success of their selection and arrangement—a thoroughly rich and rewarding experience; and he can hope that the exhibition will also provide the basis for a much needed fresh account of Pissarro's art.

Icing on top

By Anne Barton

The Provok'd Wife
Lyttelton Theatre

In 1697, when Sir John Vanbrugh finished *The Provok'd Wife*, the Restoration lay far in the past. Charles II had been dead for over a decade, his brother James II was dragging out his life in exile, and William III ruled an increasingly decent and strait-laced England. The brilliant and sceptical young men who had been wits and libertines in the 1660s and 1670s were either dead, like Rochester and Etherege, reformed, like Dorset and Sir Charles Sedley, or, like Wycherley, had become sour old men about town, obsessed with their own vanished youth and that of the age. Many of the Restoration rakes had actually committed matrimony. A high proportion of the best comedies written during the last years of the century turn away from the earlier focus upon the pre-marital hesitations and intrigues of young lovers to examine the later fortunes of these once "free" spirits within marriage—precisely the marriages which are predicated at the end of so many Restoration plays. Vanbrugh's *The Provok'd Wife* is one of the finest and most thoughtful of these comedies.

It is not very easy to reconstruct Sir John Brute as a bachelor. But he is clearly a rake who finally got married for just the reason that overwhelms most of the gallants in Etherege, and in the early Dryden, Crowne and Shadwell: because the woman he passionately desired had too shrewd a sense of the way of the world to lie with him without taking out at least a rudimentary insurance policy. How different was the unmarried Brute from the young rake Heartfree, Bellinda's reluctant lover in the comedy? Heartfree himself, like Brute a cynic about women and a devotee of the bottle, is not "well assured that I should never grow Sir John". Vanbrugh suggests this disturbing possibility without insisting that it will necessarily materialize. What he does make plain is that Lady Brute's husband is now a man whom no intelligent woman could tolerate, and for whom no one in the play has the slightest respect. A physical coward, Sir John likes to indulge his sadism by beating up women and, when drunk, assaulting the watch or unarmed citizens—one of whom he casually kills in the course of a night's "frolic". It is not only his wife and her niece Bellinda who find him gross and insufferable. The gallants Constant and Heartfree regard his company as distasteful, and endure it only to further Constant's seduction of Lady Brute. His own valet-de-chambre Rasor carries him off not to bed but to "your kennel, you cuckoldly, drunken sot, you!"

Of all the actors in England, John Wood must be one of the least suited to the part of Sir John Brute. Wood is cerebral, sophisticated, complex and sensitive. No amount of acting skill can transform him convincingly into Vanbrugh's hog. In Peter Wood's new production of *The Provok'd Wife* at the Lyttelton Theatre, two directorial remedies are applied to what looks like a desperate case of miscasting. Firstly, Vanbrugh's text has been cut and altered so as to soften and sentimentalize Brute. Any director has the option of replacing the original scenes in Act 4 (in which Brute commits his nocturnal outrages dressed up as a clergyman) with the revision forced upon Vanbrugh in 1725 by a more godly, post-Collier audience, although the substitute scenes, in which Sir John appears in drag, have less power than the originals. More questionable is Peter Wood's manhandling of the play's ending. Vanbrugh's Brute, after the multiple explanations given at the final assembly in the Brute's town house, grudgingly admits that "after all, 'tis a moot point whether I am a cuckold or not". In fact, he is not, and Vanbrugh refuses to make it clear whether Constant will ever succeed in overcoming Lady Brute's moral scruples. But in the current production, Lady Brute exits triumphantly with Constant, leaving her husband, a pathetic and solitary figure in a bleak winter landscape, to face his dishonour in a "soliloquy" arbitrarily torn from its proper context earlier in the act. Secondly, and even more destructively, the director generates sympathy for Brute throughout by trivializing and deliberately flattening the character of his wife.

Vanbrugh's Lady Brute is a woman who, two years before the comedy opens, made an irretrievable mistake. She married Sir John because she was attracted by his money and estate, and because she thought (wrongly) that she could manage him. In doing so, she condemned herself to a living hell. Intelligent, passionate and reflective, she is -like her niece Bellinda —acutely and honestly self-aware. In the splendid "confession" scene between the two women at the end of Act 3, both acknowledge the extent to which they are the acquiescing prisoners of a society dominated by men and by masculine ideas about women. Men prize modesty and innocence really crediting them), while women pretend to ignorance sexual matters. In a world offers them nothing better they practise airs and graces the mirror, and occupy the posing as the insubstantial, ing creatures men would like to be.

Vanbrugh insists, however there is a real difference between the knowing self-dramatization of Lady Brute or a Bellinda and of a ridiculous female fop like Fancyfull. The latter's performance is not only grotesquely overdone; she actually *believes* in it, and in her own invincible charms, as the other two do not. Here the National Theatre production founders on a piece of miscasting in Dorothy Tutin as grave in its way as that affecting Sir John Brute.

As Lady Brute, Geraldine McEwan behaves throughout as though she thinks she is playing Lady Fancyfull. This has the unfortunate effect of cutting the ground out from under Dorothy Tutin. McEwan's Lady Brute is all of a piece: arch, knowing, mannered and affected. The moral and religious scruples which for two years have prevented her from falling into adultery with Constant appear to be merely prudential, hypocrisy and calculation, never genuine doubt. (Indeed, in the Spring-Garden scene of Act 4, Peter Wood has seemingly directed Lady Brute to deliver her lines resisting Constant's importunities as though she were Berinthia in *The Relapse*.) Most important of all, and against the grain of Vanbrugh's text, this is not a woman who seems to have any capacity to suffer or feel pain. The result is greatly to impoverish the play. Dorothy Tutin would surely have been a far more convincing Lady Brute than Geraldine McEwan and McEwen a more lively and entertaining Lady Fancyfull. To [illegible] them this way round seems perverse except in so far as it supports the overall, and reductive, directorial interpretation.

Oddly enough, the realism and complexity which Peter Wood has denied to Vanbrugh's characters are reserved for Carl Toms's costumes and sets. With its extensive and cunningly three-dimensional panorama of late seventeenth-century London, all snow-covered roofs and twinkling, candle-lit windows, the production is visually very charming in a rather Christmas-card way. Snow falls intermittently throughout the evening, and the director has decided that the Thames should freeze over in the last part of the play, allowing some of the cast to exchange their previous sedan chairs, sleighs and ferry boats for skates. (The improbability, by the way, of any lover, however ardent, seriously attempting an outdoor seduction in an arbour under such arctic conditions does not seem to have occurred to anyone.) Particularly in the second half, Vanbrugh's purposeful and intelligent alternation of park, tavern and street scenes, with the more fundamental domestic interiors in which the women, above all, are physically and emotionally trapped, has been blurred.

Inventive but unexacting, this production arouses laughter—as it should—but little thought. There is much to be enjoyed in the wit and consummate professionalism of many of the performances. Geraldine McEwen taps only a small part of Lady Brute's emotional range, but she presents that fraction brilliantly. Nicky Henson's performance as Constant is vitiated by an insistence upon presenting him as mawkish, and so downgrading his love for Lady Brute. Michael Kitchen's Heartfree, on the other hand, and Lindsay Duncan's Bellinda, are fine. John Wood, however miscast, is never a boring actor. Nevertheless, the doubts remain. Audiences all too often believe that the comedy of the last years of the seventeenth century is invariably frivolous, inhuman and glib, and that it debases women. Preconceptions of this kind will be amply reinforced by the production offered at the Lyttelton. Underneath it all there lies entombed a good and probing Vanbrugh play.

Balancing acts

By David Scott Kastan

The Crucible
Cottesloe Theatre
The Price
Shaw Theatre

"Time", says Solomon in *The Price*, "is a terrible thing", but age has not withered either *The Price* or *The Crucible*. *The Crucible*, in fact, has grown in power and dignity (and length: its running time is over three hours). Time has freed Miller's play from the immediate political situation that inspired it. Now clearly more than an allegory of the United States in the grip of McCarthyism, *The Crucible* becomes a rending exploration of a community possessed by the demons of superstition, malice and fear.

Set in Salem in 1692, *The Crucible* is, of course, based upon the New England town's witchcraft trials. A group of adolescent girls claim to have seen witches and, fanned by spite and greed, fires of hysteria spread, eventually sucking in an entire community. John Proctor, whose wife has been accused, attempts to resist the momentum of the witch hunt but is finally himself sentenced by the court for keeping the "black allegiance".

Bill Bryden's production, served admirably by Hayden Griffin's spare pinewood set, is simple but eloquent and avoids the temptations of melodrama offered by Miller's plot. The characters are dressed predominantly in the blacks and whites of Puritan fashion, but the emotional and moral range of the production is more subtly modulated. *The Crucible* should be, and is here, something more than a romantic tale of the heroic individual confronting repressive authority. Evil shows its human face, and though we do not admire surely we understand the motives and emotions of the witch hunters—Reverend Parris's insecurity, Thomas Putnam's greed, Deputy Governor Danforth's fear of a morally difficult world in which the conscience must be agile. And when the citizens of Salem are caught in the rising hysteria, the audience in the intimate Cottesloe Theatre is itself not immune. There is disconcerting nervous laughter in the trial scene, and when Abigail (Caroline Embling) screams chillingly, claiming to see a yellow bird menacing her, more than one member of the audience the night I was there turned to see where she pointed. When evil is felt so immediately, we cannot feel easily superior to characters who fall under its sway.

The cast brilliantly establishes and maintains the moral balances necessary to keep the play from tipping towards melodrama. Mark McManus's Proctor goes to his death not as a saint but as a man, aware of his weakness but also of a core of decency and dignity that must not be extinguished. Dinah Stabb is also superb as the severe and straight-backed Elizabeth who agonizingly learns too late that she has been a "cold wife", and Dave Hill is a marvellously panicky and self-protective Reverend Parris.

If John Proctor discovers something for which to die, the characters of *The Price* search for something for which to live. The play is about two brothers who have not met for sixteen years and come together now, as their dead father's furniture is to be sold off. Victor is a fifty year old policeman, ready to retire and afraid of the future. Once a promising science student, he left university after two years to care for their bankrupt father. Walter is now a successful doctor who walked away from the family after the depression, denying his brother a loan and sending his father only five dollars a month. Victor is married to a loving but shrilly ambitious wife; Walter is divorced and has recently had a breakdown. Each has paid the price for what he is today, and the play dramatizes the account.

Anthony Cornish's direction seems heavy handed after Bryden's and the failing is damaging in a play that depends, in Miller's phrase, upon "a fine balance of sympathy" between the two brothers. At the Shaw, Malcolm Rennie's Victor becomes too firmly the sympathetic victim, while John Bennett's Walter is harsh and unlovable, blurring the play's insistence that each knows and reveals the truth about the other.

Pumpkin pi

By T. P. Matheson

Harvest
Birmingham Repertory Studio

Ellen Dryden's first full-length play begins and ends with hymn singing in the Methodist chapel of a small Warwickshire village. The opening ceremony is the funeral service for the heartily disliked, atheist grandfather of the Fenton family, who mourn in pews set among the audience. The minister, adorned in Cambridge MA gown and hood, offers traditional comfort from a raised pulpit. Opposite him ideologically and physically, poised on top of a piano, the spotlit clever daughter of the family counterpoints what she takes to be hypocrisy with a sardonic commentary.

This counterpoint — between Christian faith and secular humanism—provides the argument of the play, reaching an inconclusive climax during the preparations for the harvest festival referred to in the title. Amid the carefully assembled pumpkins, onions, potatoes, grapes and sheaves of corn, the exponent of salvation through rational investigation, with her crumbling marriage in a prosperous London suburb, finally confronts the custodian of the parables with his self-effacing life of celibate rural service. They avoid an intimate friendship and, in doing so, leave the argument and the drama in the air.

But the argument is not the whole story. Marian has joined the tense reunion partly in the hope of lifting her family out of what she sees as a Bunyanesque slough. She is a fashionable and angst-ridden Beatie Bryant, echoing Wesker's heroine's cry that "Education ent only books and music—it's asking questions, all the time". But what if learning, as was feared of St Paul, should make you mad? Ted, Marian's slower, artisan brother, dreamed of study and even began a degree course. But before long he was weeping over his tutorial books. He withdrew to the relative simplicities of the factory production-line and comfortable, oppressive domesticity. If knowledge is dangerous, must we, as the minister here suggests, wait for the tigers of wrath to drive out the horses of instruction?

The context is Weskerian, but without any apparent political dimension. The naturalistic flow of the family reunion is disrupted not only by developing tension over the funeral baked meats (lumpy ham- and cheese slices) but also by flashbacks which re-enact crucial moments in the family's history, chiefly involving Marian and Ted. The tone is witty and humane, with several strongly-characterized female roles, but there are longueurs in both plot and production.

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to the editor

Leonard and Virginia Woolf

r,—I feel I must protest vehe- ly against the innuendoes about ard Woolf which run right gh Phyllis Grosskurth's review the last volume of Virginia lf's letters (October 31).

happen to be one of the few le still alive who saw and cor- onded with Mrs Woolf during last fortnight of her life. She Leonard met me for lunch in don on March 14, and Leonard n broke the news to me that ginia had just completed a new el. This revelation threw Virginia o a state of acute agitation, and, I clearly remember, her hands gan to shake while she insisted at it was no good, couldn't be blished, and so on. Leonard ietly but firmly resisted her pinion, and told her that it *Between the Acts*) was one of the ost impressive and beautiful things she had written. It was finally suggested that I should read it and give y casting vote (to which I had a erfect right as being an equal artner in the Press). It was also rranged that I should send her ome MSS recently offered to *New Writing*, to occupy her mind and distract her anxiety about *Between the Acts*. She refers to them in her letter of March 20, by which time the MSS were already on their way to her. She read them, and made intelligent comments on them; meanwhile I had read the typescript of *Between the Acts* and given it as my enthusiastic opinion that it must certainly be published. She had however already decided against publication and wrote to me to that effect (Letter 3709). This letter was enclosed in a letter from Leonard saying that she was on the verge of a serious breakdown and that I should write to her to say I agreed to the postponement. But before the letter reached her she had already drowned herself.

What Miss Grosskurth does not *mention is* that in her last letter to her sister Vanessa she said that she had been hearing voices again and (remembering her crises in 1913-15) she was certain that meant inevitable madness approaching. This does not in the least mean that she was *already* raving, nor incapable of the act of drowning herself. She was also, I am sure, deeply oppressed by the idea that if she did go completely mad Leonard, under war conditions, would find it very difficult to engage nurses to look after her.

I most distinctly remember that when Leonard and I met again some days after her suicide, he broke into tears as he described the sequence of events (the body had not by then been discovered).

Miss Grosskurth says: "The scene of Virginia watching Leonard as he read the passage about the Jew could be a tableau from Strindberg. No wonder she was frightened. How could he ever forgive her for this most devastating of humiliations? How would he retaliate?" (page 1226). This is absurd, and worse, because Leonard was not reading only the particular passage she refers to, but the whole long book in its page proofs. And that particular passage was not cut out.

Miss Grosskurth also harps on the labour of running the Hogarth Press, how wearisome it had been to Virginia as well as Leonard. She does not mention that she and Leonard had, since 1938, rejoiced in the fact that I was taking the main burden off their shoulders, nor that she had written in her diary long before that the Hogarth Press had inestimable value to her because it absolved her from having to make concessions to the whims (for alterations), and suggestions for new books, of other publishers.

I had my differences with Leonard Woolf, often rather violent, as I have related in *Thrown to the Woolfs*, but nothing, least of all Miss Grosskurth's insinuations, will make me alter my conviction that one of the central concerns of his life was the well-being of his wife, Virginia.

JOHN LEHMANN.

85 Cornwall Gardens, London SW7.

Curtius

Sir,—I should like to point out that Ernst Robert Curtius's *Essays on European Literature*, which includes the essays on Joyce and Eliot alluded to in Peter Dronke's article of October 3, was published in English translation by the Princeton University Press in 1973.

As I indicate in the introduction to that volume, the author of the remark that during the war years Curtius had become "a bitter and sarcastic man, magnificent in his bitterness" was the literary critic and journalist Willy Haas, the friend of Hofmannsthal and Werfel, the editor during the 1920s of *Die literarische Welt* and, after the war, of Kafka's *Letters to Milena*.

MICHAEL KOWAL.

922 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10021.

Lord Halifax

Sir,—I write to correct a simple misstatement. It was not Neville Chamberlain whom I stated to have *not* read *Mein Kampf*, but Halifax. Perhaps this was rather worse in a Foreign Secretary. As to that I make no "categorical" statement (Stephen Koss's review, October 24). But I should prefer some credit when young, and when these men were so grievously wrong, instead of being taken to task for having been right about Appeasement.

A. L. ROWSE.

St Austell, Cornwall.

'The Case of the Philosopher's Ring'

Sir,—I would like to take issue with some points raised by A. J. Ayer in his review of my book, *The Case of the Philosopher's Ring* (October 3).

It is not the main business of fiction to be accurate, but I fear that Professor Ayer has misread just what the book says. It is hardly an impropriety, for example, for Bertrand Russell to quote his dead grandmother's views on writing books instead of waging politics, since he uses the past tense; nor should it be surprising that Russell should foresee a world war resulting from the European arms race. The book does not state that Keynes's *Treatise on Probability* was already published in 1913; publication was delayed until after the war, but the work was substantially completed and privately circulated before, and hence it is not impossible that Sherlock Holmes would know Keynes as a probability theorist. Nor is it correct to say that I falsely represent G. E. Moore as a sceptic; I simply let Moore play Cheshire cat with Sherlock Holmes, using themes and passages straight out of the *Principia Ethica*. As for Wittgenstein's moody changes of opinion on his philosophical writings: von Wright's "Biographical Sketch" states that the *Tractatus* was finished in August 1918. By the next year Wittgenstein had already given up philosophy, leaving Russell to see to the publication of the *Tractatus* (not without a good deal of disapproval from Wittgenstein).

Professor Ayer's comments notwithstanding, I believe the portrayal of these historical persons is substantially accurate. The anachronisms which are introduced (such as moving up Russell's incarceration to 1914—not 1913, as Ayer states) are there for the sake of the plot.

If Sherlock Holmes were looking over my shoulder, he might deduce that Ayer is himself too closely tied to one faction in the book to accept the light in which they are portrayed. Ramanujan's theorems may be "nonsensical" to Professor Ayer, but there is no fiction here. Ramanujan's mathematics was an exotic development of a very traditional branch of mathematics; nothing could be more different than the radical movement of mathematical logicians of which Russell, and more remotely Ayer himself, are heirs. And if one reflects on the ending of *The Case of the Philosopher's Ring*, one might conclude that Russell and Holmes and their brand of philosophy are mistaken: they have manufactured a crime out of a life-style that they did not understand. Perhaps one should conclude that the philosopher's ring is not quite broken, even today.

RANDALL COLLINS.

Department of Sociology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville 22903.

Graham Greene

Sir,—I am collecting material for the authorized biography of Graham Greene and would be most grateful to any of your readers who can assist me with personal recollections or by the loan of any letters.

NORMAN SHERRY.

Department of English Literature, University of Lancaster, Lancaster.

Mary Shelley and Her Letters

Sir,—In his letter of October 10, A. N. Wilson tells us that he *did* read Betty T. Bennett's excellent edition of *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* before writing his condescending review of it; he demonstrates, however, that he did not read my response (October 3) which he attempts to answer. Wilson and the compositor can contend about which of them deserves credit for the novel spelling "Trelawnay", but Wilson himself not only misquotes a statement by Richard Holmes, but misattributes it to Nicholas A. Joukovsky.

Contrary to Wilson's insinuations, I have nothing against "generalists", as will be clear to those who read my introduction to *The Evidence of the Imagination*, in which the term arises. I simply believe that, whether writing a book or reviewing one, all scholars and critics should begin by reading carefully the best authorities and end by checking the facts in their own manuscripts. (On both points, Claire Tomalin proves herself a better generalist than A. N. Wilson.) If half of Mary Shelley's letters remained either unpublished or published only in corrupt texts, only specialists who have time and money to seek around the world for manuscripts to microfilm could write anything authoritative on her life.

Even specialists familiar with an author's handwriting cannot trust photocopies, and therefore those who work at such libraries as the Bodleian or Pforzheimer would still have what seems to many an unfair advantage.

The publication of a significant author's letters in a reliable, annotated, and well-indexed edition such as Bennett's enables the generalist to write with some accuracy on a topic outside his field of expertise—if he is willing to read. Dissemination of such basic documents also permits the interested public at large to read and to judge for themselves who is quoting whom out of context, rather than remaining dependent upon either the priestly ministrations of itinerant generalists or dogmatic proclamations by a college of specialists. I should think that Wilson would join in welcoming an end to such élitist mediation.

DONALD H. REIMAN.

Editor, *Shelley and his Circle*,
The Carl H. Pforzheimer Library,
41 East 42nd Street, New York,
NY 10017.

P. G. Wodehouse

Sir,—I enjoyed Richard Usborne's review of *Jeeves Takes Charge* (October 10), and hope that the show will make its way to New York. To clarify a matter on which he expressed doubt: Bertie Wooster does indeed wear a monocle. In "Jeeves and the Spot of Art", from *Very Good, Jeeves*, Bertie had his portrait painted by the girl he was then pursuing, Gwladys Pendlebury. Jeeves, who disliked the portrait, arranged to have it used as an ad for Slingsby's Superb Soups. Bertie, when he first saw the poster, was aghast: "There I sat, absolutely slavering through a monocle about six inches in circumference at a plateful of soup. . . ." Surely the monocle would not have appeared in Bertie's portrait unless he wore it habitually.

MAURICE LEE, JR.

10 Symmes Court, Cranbury, New Jersey.

Sir,—"Who—I should say, whom—are you knitting that sweater for?" "It is not a sweater", replied Miss Forester, with a womanly candour that well became her. "It is a sock. . . ." ("A Woman is only a Woman" in *The Clicking of Cuthbert*.)

That "that well became her" (or, more often, him) is a turn of phrase that P. G. Wodehouse dropped in, nonsensically and evocatively, a dozen times in three quarters of a century of books. The phrase seems to have a prelate-pulpit-public-school-chapel ring about it. Wodehouse was quoting something, mimicking something, parodying something, I feel sure. But what? Can any of your readers help?

RICHARD USBORNE.

Fenton House, Windmill Hill, Hampstead, London NW3 6RT.

Guido Morris

Sir,—Alan Jenkins is right to remind us of Guido Morris, printer (October 24), and of Anthony Baker's detective article in *The Private Library*. In the latter, reference is made to Edward Gordon Craig, whom Morris described as "the greatest formative influence in my becoming, and remaining, a fine printer" and with whom he maintained a long and enthusiastic correspondence: "his letters arriving like ocean waves, sometimes almost flooded me out of my studio, and provided me always with the stimulus I needed to keep a difficult flag flying".

Readers of your pages might like to know that Morris's letters to Craig are all now in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Département des Arts du Spectacle), together with some photographs and an extensive collection of Latin Press ephemera. They include the first printed letter and are sometimes written over a period of several days, so that up to the war an almost continuous, mutual life-support system was maintained. The many addresses fully reflect Morris's wanderings, and the range of handmade papers on which he wrote (among them the smooth pink Barcham Green) his feeling for their beauty. He was a compulsive communicator and these letters contain information which will clarify some of the mysteries unsolved by Anthony Baker

Craig's letters to Morris are in the Newberry Library, Chicago (1936-45: 229 pieces) and in a private collection, New York (1946-54: 36 letters). With them he sent proofs of his wood engravings for *Robinson Crusoe* (not yet published in an edition which does them justice), stimulating Morris to practical advice and help. Jointly they planned to issue an autobiographical chronology of Craig's work, but external circumstances seem to have blocked the printer's response and the idea, like their correspondence, petered out. An annotated manuscript of "Notes and Queries for EGC [1946]" is now in the Donald Oenslager Collection at Yale University (Beinecke Library).

L. M. NEWMAN.

7 Cheseman Street, London SE26 4RA.

Filling in the Blanks

Sir,—I was amazed at Thos. Adams's choice of an "irritating" use of the blanked-out name (Letters, October 17). He quotes a sentence from the first page of *Barchester Towers*: "The death of old Dr Grantly, who had for many years filled the chair with weak authority, took place exactly as the ministry of Lord ——— was going to give place to that of Lord ———." Far from being irritating, this seems to me a marvellously clever and funny way of using a literary convention to suggest that the political change was nothing more than a succession of non-entities.

STEPHEN BROWN.

212 W Washington, O'Fallon, Illinois 62269.

Among this week's contributors

ANNE BARTON is a Fellow of New College, Oxford.

JOHN BRAMBLE is a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

RONALD BLYTHE's most recent book is *The View in Winter*, 1979.

E. M. J. CAMPBELL is Professor of Geography at Birkbeck College, London.

PAUL CARTLEDGE is the author of *Sparta and Lakonia, A Regional History 1300-362 BC*, 1979.

ROBERT CONQUEST's books include *Between Mars and Venus*, 1962, and *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps*, 1978.

PETER CONRAD's most recent book is *Imagining America*, 1980.

GORDON CRAIG's books include *Germany 1866-1945*, 1978.

VALENTINE CUNNINGHAM is the author of *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel*, 1975.

RICHARD GRAY is Professor of African Studies at the University of London. He co-edited *Christianity in Independent Africa*, 1979.

SIMON HORNBLOWER is a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

GRAHAM HOUGH's books include *The Dream and the Task*, 1963, and *Style and Stylistics*, 1969.

JOHN HOUSE is a lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art. He was a co-organizer of the Royal Academy's Post-Impressionist Exhibition.

R. J. HUNTER is a lecturer in Archaeology at the University of Bradford.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON is Professor of French History at University College London. His books include *A Concise History of France*, 1970.

DAVID SCOTT KASTAN's *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* will be published next year by Macmillan.

STEVEN KUPFER's stories will be published in an anthology by Faber later this year.

DAVID MARSHALL LANG's books include *Armenia, Cradle of Civilization*, 1970.

PHILIP LARKIN's most recent collection of poems is *High Windows*, 1974.

PETER LEWIS is a lecturer in English at the University of Durham.

JOHN LUCAS is the editor of *The 1930s: a Challenge to Orthodoxy*, 1979.

ROBERT B. MARTIN's biography of Tennyson, *The Unquiet Heart*, is reviewed in this week's *TLS*.

T. P. MATHESON is Deputy Director of the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham.

JOHN NAUGHTON is a lecturer in Systems at the Open University.

REDMOND O'HANLON has just finished a study of Joseph Conrad and Charles Darwin.

THOMAS PAKENHAM's books include *The Year of Liberty: The Story of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798*, 1968, and *The Boer War*, 1979.

PATRICK PARRINDER's *Science Fiction and its Teaching* is reviewed in this week's *TLS*.

GRAHAM PETRIE's novel *Seahorse* was published earlier this year.

TOM PHILLIPS's "treated Victorian novel", *A Humument*, will be reviewed shortly in the *TLS*.

C. R. PIKE is a lecturer in Russian at the University of Keele. His *The Futurists, the Formalists and the Marxist Critique* was published this year.

PETER PORTER's most recent collection of poems is *The Cost of Seriousness*, 1978.

DAVID PRYCE-JONES's books include *The Face of Defeat: Palestinian refugees and guerrillas*, 1972, and *Unity Mitford: a Quest*, 1976.

CAROL RUMENS's most recent collection of poems is *A Necklace of Mirrors*, 1979.

ALAN RYAN's books include *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 1970.

SARA SELWOOD is a lecturer in Art History at the Open University.

TOM SHIPPEY is Professor of English Language and Medieval Literature at the University of Leeds.

CLIVE SINCLAIR's collection of short stories, *Hearts of Gold*, was published in 1979.

JULIAN SYMONS's books include *The Thirties: A Dream Revolved*, 1960.

F. M. L. THOMPSON's books include *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, 1963.

KATHARINE WORTH's books include *Revolution in Modern English Drama*, 1973.

Tomorrow in the gutter

By Tom Shippey

REX MALIK (Editor) :
Future Imperfect
Science Fact and Science Fiction
219pp. Frances Pinter. £10.
0 903804 64 6

JOHN GRIFFITHS :
Three Tomorrows
American, British and Soviet Science Fiction
217pp. Macmillan. £10.
0 333 26910 1

PATRICK PARRINDER :
Science Fiction
Its Criticism and Teaching
166pp. Methuen. £5.95.
0 416 71390 4

WALTER E. MEYERS :
Aliens and Linguists
257pp. The University of Georgia Press. $16.
0 8203 0487 5

Brian Aldiss is quoted as saying once that science fiction ought to get out of the classroom and back in the gutter where it belongs. The remark was not one of contempt, but rather of surly pride. Most science fiction authors started off in a publishers' gutter, from which they fought their way to recognition through hostile criticism, poor pay, horrible blurbs and appalling covers. If they did it once they can do it again, Mr Aldiss implies: they don't need help, they don't have to put up with being patronized; if literary men consign them to the gutter the consigners are the only ones to lose. In any case many of the critical brickbats science fiction has got used to amount to no more than calling it a lower middle class form, insensitive to the interests of the Forsterian tradition; Aldiss's remark recognizes that the insult of an enemy is a badge of honour.

Most of all, though, his maxim expresses provoked dislike for classrooms and teachers. If something has to be taught, it's lost its clarity, if it has to be a "set text", it's lost its grip, if the gurus of literary criticism can't do better on science fiction than they have, then maybe it's time to start wondering if they even got Shakespeare right (a thought, incidentally, dramatized in Isaac Asimov's "The Immortal Bard"). Critics venturing into science fiction have a lot of ruffled feathers to soothe. Can they manage it?

Plenty of offence, it has to be said, is still being given. *Future Imperfect* is a collection of essays on the plausibility of science fiction, or what hints it can give the planners. The book is produced by Sperry Univac, manufacturer of advanced computing systems; its items were delivered originally at the firm's Executive Centre in St Paul de Vence; it must have cost the company tens of thousands. Yet for all the good it will do anyone, Sperry Univac might as well have gone to their local cathedral and invested the money in candles. Too many contributors did not do their homework—reading science fiction. Thus one of them declares that 95 per cent of all the race's information about brains has been discovered in the last ten years. Good. Now what would *Astounding*'s late editor John Campbell have told him? Certainly, that he ought to find one bit of all that information, translate it into daily life, and then explore all the second-order consequences (see the *oeuvre* of John Varley). Another hammers out the insight that scientific discovery has dangerous social implications, and then, remembering his brief, inquires whether science fiction writers think enough about them. "I know there are some like Ray Bradbury who spring to mind who do . . .". Bradbury (a *notoriously* thoughtless author who has not written seriously for decades) is clearly the only name that sprang to mind at all; and the same contributor's belief that an exponential growth rate in computer capacity must, for God's sake, result in *some* sort of progress, has been in violent dispute since Bernard Wolfe's *Limbo 90* (1952) and Vonnegut's *Player Piano* the same year.

What this collection really shows is how much more thoughtful science fiction writers have to be than professional cyberneticists. It's been a commonplace in the field for years that computers condense power. The people who can work them (even more, the people who can *evade* their workings) might form a new class, like armoured horsemen in the tenth century. And proles in Rome had votes as well, though it did them little good. Against themes like that, chatter about paperless offices and whines of anti-machine bias look extraordinarily thin. *Future Imperfect* is redeemed only by two excellent articles from Heinz Wolff of the Medical Research Council. He, it seems, *has* read some science fiction, and his laboratories are developing something like what Arthur Clarke called a CORA, or CORonary Alarm.

John Griffiths's sharp disdain in *Three Tomorrows* for the Lumpen intelligentsia is accordingly a clear mark in his favour; so is the fact that he can read Russian and offer a genuine survey of that science-fictional tradition to set against the familiar British and American ones. Mr Griffiths is indeed the only writer I have come across who has helped me to understand the frequent claims for daring and innovation inside what look like extremely ponderous Soviet works. What one has to remember, he points out repeatedly, is that in a system capable of saying that an individual author has "disregarded the basic laws of social development and failed to realize that even science fiction must be scientifically based on Marxism and Leninism" (*Neues Deutschland* on Müller's *Operation Ganymede*) almost any old Western cliché has a fuse and detonator. Non-human intelligences *aren't* in Marx; successful individual as opposed to collective action shouldn't be necessary in a future state; advanced civilizations will have developed social morals.

If one keeps all those points in mind one sees why the Strugatskys' *Roadside Picnic* (about a profiteer exploring the wilderness of dangerous rubbish an alien spaceship has left behind) is such a venture, and why Stanislaw Lem should have seen it as expressing only "contempt for humanity", rather than the acute awareness of human vulnerability built into British science fiction since *War of the Worlds*.

Mr Griffiths is good, too, on the way that science fiction hunts for blind spots, on how it derives plausibility from its readers' cultivated awareness of ignorance. Its pattern is flux. In some other and minor respects, though, Mr Griffiths's own "amateur status" as a critic reminds one, grudgingly, that professional academics have some good points after all. They are paid to disagree with one another, for one thing, which means they read their own work suspiciously. If Mr Griffiths had done that he would not have written, for example, that British disaster stories like John Christopher's examine "the dilemma of choice between survival and barbarism". Really their dilemma is between death and barbarism, and their most surprising common claim is that many (British) people would prefer the former, not out of pride but out of lack of imagination. That is why so many of the "cosy catastrophes" feature the obligatory rape-scene which Mr Griffiths notes. It's there because rape, in science fiction terms, is not only nasty but contra-survival. The rapist has no thought for reproduction, and for an immediate pleasure takes a risk likely in a state of nature to get him killed. In John Christopher's worlds—Wells would have agreed with him—the rapist is someone who has seen civilization fall and deduced that the police can't stop him. What he doesn't see is that the police can't protect him either. He still thinks (poor *bourgeois* that he is) that jungles are gardens.

Theses like those give much science fiction a collective power; but they need digging out. As his book unfolds one notes a certain impatience in Mr Griffiths with modern literature and its concern for "emotional entrails", with the 1970s and rejection of reason, with the future and Western failure of nerve. "Tomorrow has been cancelled", says the last chapter. It's a new Dark Age for all of us.

Things don't usually go as badly as mere logic would suggest, though, which is another way of saying that bold analyses have usually missed something out. Very little is missed out of Patrick Parrinder's *Science Fiction: Its Criticism and Teaching*, a work of intense professionalism designed clearly for the new generation of science fiction teachers. It ends with a thorough bibliography and a chapter to help you design your own science fiction course. All the way through it is careful to lay foundations, to open up lines of inquiry guaranteed to prove productive, even (on occasion) to provide parries to the expected thrusts of the science fiction teacher's more orthodox colleagues. Science fiction is "paraliterature", says Mr Parrinder; yet unlike "paraliterature's" other branches (the Western, the romance) it is not intrinsically nostalgic. Proving it "escapist" is not as easy as might appear. Attempts to define it have too often been adventitiously historical, or have made superficial points about the overlap of science fiction with the wonder tale. Could you really retell King Midas in science fiction terms? Mr Parrinder asks: was C. S. Lewis right when he said angels were as good a form of transport for stories as spaceships? No, he concludes. Even gimmicks embody a world-view; you can't just switch ray-guns and Colt .45s. Science fiction does depend on a new element of "cognition".

Meanwhile there are clues to be gained from the sociology of science fiction, by examining it as "product", as "message", as "document". Mr Parrinder takes the time needed to explain his concepts, but makes sure that time spent is not wasted. He goes on from definitions and sociology to looking at science fiction's approximations to other literary genres, romance, fable, epic and parody: in each case he shows, often with striking economy in choice of scene and quotation, how the genres are and are not alike. At the end one has a set of ideas with which to approach almost any science fiction work.

Nevertheless books on criticism and teaching will not get through to the core of science fiction readership, the "fans" who in their ghetto or gutter-way so strongly mimic (as Mr Parrinder notes) the activities of students of high literature—comparing, collecting, re-reading, canonizing. The main fannish critical virtue is total recall, and for that one needs to go to Walter E. Meyers's highly engaging if strictly limited book on *Aliens and Linguists*. In most science fiction stories there is a communication problem: man to Martian, man to machine, man to animal. In many cases there are also specialized problems such as deciding what *is* an animal, what is a mutant, how far different branches of evolved humanity (Eloi and Morlocks) can be considered members of the same species. Naturally there is an intense interest in language.

Much more surprisingly, as Professor Meyers says straight off, the wealth of situations contrasts with an odd poverty of linguistic ex[illegible]tion. The field is littered with [illegible]outs: "He spoke faultless Angl[illegible]"; "The whole galaxy operates on an English basis, it's the coun[illegible]guage of the Mother Planet, see", worst of all, "He switched on the autotranslator". This gadget, as Professor Meyers [illegible] operates on the principle that with enough exponential growth in computer capacity you can, given the word for "goat" is Z[illegible], deduce the German for "[illegible]".

How have things got so bad? One reason is American isolationism; another the dreadful language theories of English and American schools, too often dedicated simply to eradicating "ain't". In this area science fiction authors share the weakness of their culture, believing too readily that only physical sciences are real. But they have available to them several points of growth, for instance, that many American authors are deeply fascinated by the relativity of culture; easy converts to the B. L. Whorf thesis that the structures of different languages constrain their speakers' perceptions of reality: Newton is built into English, Einstein is built (so they say) into Hopi. Perhaps a scientifically accurate language would be a better idea? Hence Samuel Delany's *Babel-17*, Jack Vance's *The Languages of Pao*, Ian Watson's *The Embedding*. Professor Meyers contrasts these fictional reactions with great insight and care. He looks too, at the problems of machine languages, dead languages, dolphin languages, languages based on smell or touch (for "phoneme" read "tacteme"), telepathy and [illegible] learning systems.

Perhaps his richest field is the semantic one. Everyone knows the trick of bringing in the traveller's term, like Mrs Le Guin's *shifgrethor*, "prestige, face, place, the pride-relationship, the untranslatable and all-important principle of social authority in Karhide and all the civilizations of Gethen". Professor Meyers shows how much can be gained fictionally from rooting stories in just such explications; from showing too, as Mrs Le Guin does in *The Dispossessed*, how even an anarchic culture can contain its own betrayal in a manipulative, controlling language which avoids singular possessives and words for family, and which uses words for "sickness" and "health" so politically that the young are ashamed to be ill.

Aliens and Linguists as a book is full of such fascinating asides. As a demonstration of the sheer vitality and variety of modern American science fiction, it has no rivals.

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The Cybernetic Imagination in Science Fiction
282pp. MIT Press. £9.30.
0 262 23100 X

One of the major paradoxes of science fiction is that a literature claiming to derive much of its value from its openness to change and innovation should, especially in the past two decades, have displayed such a marked hostility to science and technology. The keynote of science fiction writing in the 1960s is to be found in the ruined landscapes of J. G. Ballard, littered with the useless artefacts of a technological society, or in Harlan Ellison's "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream", with its all-powerful computer devising endlessly ingenious torments for the helpless humans in its clutches—a far cry from the 1940s confidence of an Asimov, a Heinlein, or a Clarke that man's ingenuity would anticipate even problems thousands of years in the future and come up with ways of solving them.

The intention of Patricia Warrick's book is to explore and explain this paradox within the framework of one of the major subgenres of science fiction (works dealing with robots and computers), while attempting also to assess the literary qualities of this literature. The criterion offered for this assessment is that "SF achieves [a] sense of awe or wonder when it creates a metaphor of complementary intellectual perception . . . a dynamic of transcendent awareness that ends in a moment of illumination".

For most of the book, however, this criterion is set aside in favour of a contrast between writers who work within a "closed-system" model and those who work within an "open-system". Dystopian writers, we are told, whose books generally end with, or advocate, a gleeful smashing of the malevolent, inhibiting machines that have oppressed and enslaved humanity, are essentially working within an obsolete intellectual framework. Their ideas have become repetitive and stereotyped, and their warnings have, in any case, had little real effect on the way in which twentieth-century industrial society has developed. Such writing is simplistic and suffers from a failure of imagination, and only the earliest examples of it, such as Forster's "The Machine Stops", Zamiatin's *We* (which Warrick incorrectly states ends with the complete suppression of the revolution by the authorities) and Capek's *R.U.R.*, convey any impression of originality.

In contrast is the "open-system" approach of Arthur Clarke in *The City and the Stars*, Samuel R. Delany in *Nova*, Frank Herbert in *Destination: Void*, Stanislaw Lem in his robot stories, and a handful of others. Here we have a positive vision of a future open to *any* possibilities, instead of one doomed to intensify the worst aspects of the contemporary world, governed by speculative leaps of the imagination rather than a narrow and short-term extrapolation of present trends. Two writers exemplifying this mode are explored in depth: Isaac Asimov in his robot stories and novels, and Philip K. Dick.

The yoking together of Asimov and Dick as somehow sharing a common vision is in itself surprising and results from the shifting between the two incompatible standards of critical judgment already mentioned. Though Dr Warrick shows herself aware of some of the problems involved in this (acknowledging that the novels of Fred Hoyle or Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* are important speculations but rather poor art), she manages to praise both Dick and Asimov only by applying different criteria of judgment to each of them. Asimov can be praised for the intelligence and care with which he maps out a harmonious future for both man and machine, while the generally pedestrian quality of his *literary* imagination is quietly ignored; Dick, on the other hand, is admired for his dazzling literary inventiveness, even though his vision of the future is often as black as that of the most disillusioned dystopian. Though Warrick's analysis of Dick is often illuminating, it fits rather uneasily into the overall pattern of her book and she is forced to resort to calling him both "dark" and "positive", "dystopian" yet somehow also "hopeful" in a somewhat desperate attempt to hold everything together.

Though Warrick's attack on the fashionable gloom of most 1960s and early 1970s science fiction is welcome, and her focus on Dick, Delany, and Lem as alternative models is perfectly valid, there appears at times to be a conflict between her own humanistic, even dystopian affinities, and the optimistic vision of the future that she is, by the end of the book, eager to embrace. Some early pages contain a detailed listing of the negative effects of cybernetic technology (the possibility of machines dominating men, the emphasis on efficiency rather than value, the loss of privacy and individuality, growing unemployment, the inability even of experts to understand and control the total system they have created, and many other standard dystopian themes), and there is no suggestion at this point that these dangers are exaggerated or imaginary. Yet later in the book a good many of these consequences are dismissed out of hand as illusory or fairly easily rectifiable after all.

The tensions evident in this book between "open" and "closed" model thinking even in the author, between the humanist and the technician, between the poet and the scientist, do not necessarily detract from its value as an important investigation into a relatively neglected topic; rather they reflect the fruitful contradictions in a literary genre that will not easily, if ever, be fitted into a totally ordered and coherent pattern.

The shibboleth and the chic

By Robert Conquest

PETER NICHOLLS (Editor) :
The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction
An Illustrated A to Z
672pp. Granada. £15.
0 246 11020 1.

No one is compelled to like, or to be interested in science fiction. In the old days most people weren't, and those who were lived happily in what Peter Nicholls calls their "ghetto". Less than twenty years ago the great John W. Campbell Junior was able to rejoice at Susan Sontag's ban on serious academic concern for sf. Now alas (or hurrah, depending on what view you take), things have changed, and in addition to those who know and care about science fiction there is a larger group who talk about it, or feel it necessary to affect some acquaintance with it, or are simply stuck with coping with it against their real inclinations.

Fortunately, a shibboleth is available. As the editors note, "sf" is "the only contraction used by science-fiction fans; journalists and other non-sympathetic outsiders can readily be identified by their use of the repugnant 'sci-fi'". Such a view is pretty well unanimous among all writers and serious readers of the genre. Kingsley Amis has written cogently on the subject. Brian Aldiss, most good-natured of writers, says of "sci-fi" that it is only used by "would-be trendies". As the veteran Lester Del Rey writes in a recent issue of *Analog*, "There's something shoddy and debasing about the term. It rings with ugliness in my ears, though I'm not quite sure why it offends me so much. However, most of my science fiction friends seem to react the same way." That is indeed the case, and the reason for preferring the old established and unpretentious "sf" need not baffle us. The use of "sci-fi" was clearly intended to imply a jaunty insider's knowledge coupled with a modern (or as Mr Aldiss has it "trendy") demonstration of slick neologism.

The editors of this monumental work are, on the contrary, among those who truly know and care about sf: "editors", since it is a joint effort by Peter Nicholls, general editor; John Clute, associate editor; Carolyn Eardly, technical editor; and Malcolm Edwards and Brian Stableford, contributing editors, all deserving of mention and of praise, even though some also deserve a little carping, as we shall see. Meanwhile let us say that this is a unique and irreplaceable volume. There have been various other compilations of roughly the same sort, but none as exhaustive, and few as intelligent and readable. It has that freshness which goes with a labour of love, and it exhibits a scholarship in the immense field of publication which cannot be faulted: "*Imagination* . . . operated on a monthly scale briefly, September 1952 to July 1955, then reverted to bi-monthly"; "*Nebula Science Fiction:* 41 issues Autumn 1952 to August 1959 . . . . What should have been Vol. 3, No. 1, was actually marked No. 9". Doubtless it is not free from minor error, but as I write one of the few I have detected is the scarcely unforgivable insertion of a single extra letter into my own third Christian name . . . .

"The book is well set out and lavishly illustrated with reproductions of magazine covers and photographs of writers and film stills. It copes with the whole breadth of the genre, with some 2,800 entries, including over 1,800 authors, editors and critics, from Vance Aandahl to Jerzy Zulawski, together with essays on magazines, films, varieties of subject matter—and general themes such as "Politics" and "Women".

And this is where we may begin to have a few qualms. For in these general articles, though also in individual entries, a "progressive" partisanship flourishes, sometimes with reservations, sometimes taken to the point of idiocy, in a way particularly deplorable in a reference book. Sometimes, it is true, it goes with polemical liveliness, and the writers do have the excuse that an occasional blowing off of steam must have helped them through their laborious task; but sometimes it is the dullest of formulaic unthinking. "Conservative" is here almost always used in a hostile fashion. It is quite usual to find such [illegible] as "unattractively right-wing" (of John Campbell—though he and Robert Heinlein are acquitted to the charge of being Fascists, as well they might be!). While terms like "rabid" and "vitriolic" are used of writers the editors disapprove of merely for their views, we find an American professor listed as having been "asked to leave" his University "(in a case which became well-known to those interested in questions of academic freedom) for alleged left-wing activities". The actual charge was of inciting a mob to smash the windows of a university institution of which he disapproved!

This sort of thing extends to critical assessment. Orwell's *1984* is described as "an indictment of the deep tendency of modern technologically sophisticated governments, whatever their political colouration, (*sic*) to rule by coercion and 'double think'". Well, no. Nor can one believe, either, that "Hive Mind" stories "became popular during the Cold War" because they were "seen as an analogue of social organization in Soviet Russia".

Similar objections apply to the entry on "Paranoia and Schizophrenia", where stories of alien invasions, or possession, or of supermen, are characterized as in some sense paranoid. We have seen this sort of psychological approach to other types of fiction, and even when it has some slight validity, it tends to reductionism.

The editor does in fact to some extent cover himself here, on the grounds that the universe indeed contains many real dangers; but secondly makes the less helpful qualification that we cannot assume an author to be a lunatic if he writes a paranoid story, since he may be merely working tongue-in-cheek for paranoid readers. But this contains the extraordinary assumption that only a reader half off his rocker could enjoy, say, *The War of the Worlds*, which is absurd: (and he lists as paranoid scores of stories by many of the leading writers of our own period too).

Moreover, he *directly* attributes the "paranoid" stories of the 1950s to the notion that "paranoia was in the air because of McCarthyism and the preaching of Billy Graham. . .".

It is all the same to Mr Nicholls's credit that he notes a "deeply conservative streak . . . in some of genre sf's best known writers". It may sound a paradox that creative imagination, particularly that concerning itself with the future, should so often go with "conservative" opinions. But it may be argued in fact that it is radicalism that cramps and constrains the imagination—is, indeed, a sort of substitute for original thought.

There is one interesting example of a genuine political litmus which the associate editor rightly quotes. In *Galaxy* in 1968, two different lists of authors took out paid advertisements, one opposing American action in Vietnam, the other supporting America's aid to its Vietnamese allies. He notes that the great majority of sf's better known writers at the time (not necessarily of the "right") supported American action. This is of interest far beyond the sf field. First, it was one of the few rallyings in any sphere of the supporters of United States action.

This was doubtless because science fiction was then such a small world that almost everyone concerned knew each other and knew what the others were doing, so that when the first "anti-war" signatures were collected, it was easy enough for the supporters of the United States Government to rally in turn. That is to say, no special advantage accrued, as it usually does, to the leftist penchant for propaganda and organization. I think it is fairly clear that the same would have been true in almost all fields, and that the barrage of signatures and petitions from the "peace" forces could have been matched and outmatched there also, had the same conditions prevailed as in science fiction. The other point is that this "rift" did not affect, or did not much affect, the personal and professional relations of the writers concerned. It is even the case more recently, when a high proportion of the younger and more experimentalist membership of the Science Fiction Writers of America are academic lefties, that Jerry Pournelle ("a good twelfth-century liberal" according to his predecessor Poul Anderson) could be elected president. Such a lack of the *odium theologicum* is refreshing these days, especially in the United States.

And indeed, the purely political prejudice to be found in this volume too is, though pervasive and unseemly, more often thoughtless and unimaginative than actively unfair, with contributors happy to plead extenuating circumstances for non-leftists like Anderson and Niven.

Among their strange ideas about "conservative" views we may note their assertion that Earle K. Bergey's "half-dressed women were anathema to the conservative minds of the 1940s". One might argue that sexual priggishness was at least as much the product of certain strains of liberalism and radicalism as it ever was of conservatism: not only that Gladstone and Lenin and Mao are scarcely ikons of permissiveness, but that the conservative temper in this field as in others is more tolerant than the radical.

At any rate the theme on which the Encyclopedia becomes wholly *enragé* is that of feminism: there we find an uncritical attachment to the intellectual fashions of the moment, or rather of the recent past.

When the contributors write about pre-1960 sf being "rather a puritanical form" they miss the point that sexual matters (like characterization) are usually something of a digression in science fiction (usually but not always: Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* being an exceptional triumph). But since it became conventional to bring sex into everything, it has been commoner for the ideas and the action of the story to be interrupted simply to suit the new convention. The earlier period's great dominating editor, John Campbell—or rather his female assistant editor Kay Tarrant — was undoubtedly rather prudish. But in any case prudishness is not the same as "sexism".

Mr Nicholls holds that, as compared with mainstream fiction, sf has had a "dishonourable" history in its treatment of women, all too often considered as "Comforter or Victim, sadistic Amazon Queen or Girl Next Door", in fact "stereotyped". In the first place one may ask, why not? But in any case men too were treated in as stereotyped a fashion. This is partly because science fiction is not the right place for too much characterization: as C. S. Lewis remarked of fiction in which the central theme is of a strange world, "Gulliver is a commonplace little man and Alice a commonplace little girl. To tell how odd things struck odd people is to have an oddity too much."

But the allegation of a conservative "sexism" is anyhow impossible to reconcile with (for example) the appearance of the splendid James H. Schmitz in Campbell's *Astounding* right from the 1940s on, with his heroines invariably being both very feminine and completely (as this volume admits) "free of sexual role-playing clichés"—in fact acting with the skill and decision also to be found in those (I suppose) "conservative" series *The Avengers* and *Modesty Blaise*. But this shows that neither Campbell nor his readership held the attitudes attributed to them.

There is no harm in people having a particular view of a matter—radical feminism say—so long as they realize that other views are tenable. It is disgraceful to abuse the British writer Edmund Cooper as "rabidly sexist" when all is meant is that he has expressed views on the role of the sexes at variance with radical orthodoxy. And when Joanna Russ tells of an all-women planet "on which men finally arrive, assuming they are more than welcome" only to be given hell, such terms as "sexist" are withheld. Indeed, Mr Nicholls criticizes some *women* writers, too, for having heroines who are too mild.

The encyclopedists also argue, quite falsely, that women writers were at a disadvantage in pre-feminist times, in that a number of them used male or ambiguous pseudonyms. But this was not a sign that sf was a men's club. Everybody who took the slightest interest knew that Leigh Brackett, C. L. Moore, André Norton, were women (though I must admit that the fact that a more recent writer, James Tiptree Jr, was a woman was a surprise to me). But anyhow, right through the period, there were avowed women like Katherine MacLean, Kate Wilhelm, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Miriam Allen DeFord, Zenna Henderson, Anne McCaffrey, Judith Merril, who were accepted in the most natural fashion.

It is particularly unsuitable for science fiction to be treated in a temporally parochial manner. But here, even if to some degree mitigated by what appear to be conscious if sporadic efforts to rise above it, the fault is pervasive. It is not that one may complain of this on ideological grounds—that is, because one thinks an excess of feminism can be stultifying and a branding of resistance to Stalinism as "Cold War" to be sad stuff indeed (though one may). It is to be deprecated also, and in this context more importantly, first on general critical grounds, in that it represents a reductionism having no real relation at all to the merit or otherwise of the work. And secondly, science fiction is the sphere, more than any other, which implies the broadest possible scope in considering the variety of social potentialities, and the longest perspectives of future time, so that doctrinaire insistence on the parochial fashions of the 1960s or 1970s (or rather, a particular selection from these fashions) is spectacularly inappropriate.

On a different tack there is a very interesting piece by Tom Shippey on "History in SF". He attributes great influence to Arnold Toynbee, and to supposed "laws" of history propounded by others such as Vico and Spengler. But he also implies that such things as the quite frequent appearance of Galileos of the future muttering to their persecutors that something doctrine demands to be static nevertheless moves, amount to a Whig type of interpretation of history in that it is of a sort "to flatter a society's image of itself and to provide it with culture heroes by emphasizing the historical importance of individuals rather than social changes in the mass". This seems slightly to neglect the point that "mass" emphasis, necessary fifty or 100 years ago in correcting excessive kings-and-battles history, is now itself taken to excess, in a manner particularly unsuited to the era of Hitler and Stalin. Still, Mr Shippey ends up with the very sensible observation, "One may sense a strong and shared feeling that, after all, no one knows for sure how the future will go, and that there are many points at which the past might plausibly have been expected to

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develop in some way other than the way it did". And this is far more important in sf and in general than his argument about particular approaches.

Science fiction should surely be some sort of protection against the ever-recurrent feeling not only that an age's own views and aspirations are far in advance of those of its predecessors but also that (unlike all previous fashions) they are established as eternal truth—especially, as now, when they are already moribund. Moreover, contributors also have some difficulty in getting clear of the old fallacy that the depiction of a human or alien social order or historical development indicates the author's approval of his invention. They tend to treat all information they can find about the political or other views and the supposed psychological make-up of the authors as definitive of the finished product. But, in successful science fiction (though not only there), such drives even if accurately described are no more than the boosters which may propel the writer to escape velocity, to the sphere where he can create strange and consistent worlds for their own sake.

One might indeed urge a more or less opposite point—that to understand the strange social and political orders of our own planet requires an effort as much of the imagination as of the intellect, and the man who has really got used to the idea of a truly alien culture set on Mars or Mizar III finds himself in a better position to understand Politburos and Ayatollahs.

But sf is primarily not some type of mental training. It is a means of giving a certain sort of pleasure, like other art forms. And however beset with psycho-politico-analysis, the bulk of the entries here on individual writers are in principle concerned with critical evaluation. Now, no one could expect scores of brief essays of this sort all to be impeccable—and within their limitations a high level is maintained. Nor can one demand that we should agree with each judgment, or with the proportion of space given to each writer: but it is not merely a matter of saying, as I would, that the piece on Edgar Rice Burroughs is excellent, the one on William Burroughs inadequate. For, apart from the inbuilt political slant, there is also a massive, though less intensive, aesthetic bias.

The editor is frank in his reservations about the "golden age of sf" in the late 1930s and early 1940s when *Astounding* dominated the field. And he says that anyhow by the 1950s *Astounding* "was coming to be seen as a force for conservatism in magazine sf, rather than its spearhead". But this is to fall into the commonest of literary traps—that it is worse to "conserve" a good than to "spearhead" a new tradition. It all depends. We have, in the field of the ordinary novel, seen many spearheads rusting away over the past seventy years, while the older tradition, from Kingsley Amis to Anthony Powell, is doing fine. It is true, or sometimes true, in the arts that an early convention may become exhausted: but that is no guarantee that the new will be better.

In Mr Del Rey's philippic against the usage "sci-fi", quoted above, he goes on to note that work rightly so describable has actually emerged: "You must have seen it. It uses a few gimmicks from science, some pretty bad writing, some gobbledegook"; and he points out that at least one American paperback publisher is already using the clear and honest warning label "sci-fi" and calling his product "a chilling novel of man's space-born origins having the compulsive fascination of *Chariots of the Gods*". Mr Del Rey comments "quite probably for sci-fi readers, the blurb may be true". In fact, something nasty happened to a genre which is truly imaginative and, yes, intellectual. It was dragged down to a pop level, to the new cult-illiteracies, to degenerate fag-end surrealism.

"Pop spontaneity", D. J. Enright has noted, is one of the twin enemies of poetry, the other being "academic complexity". They are the enemies of sf too. And as to the "academic", this encyclopedia has an interesting piece on "Sf in the Classroom" which reveals that there are probably 300 courses being offered in the United States universities on sf, while a recent *Research Guide to Science Fiction Studies* compiled by Marshall B. Tymn, Roger C. Schlobin and L. W. Currey lists, I am sorry to say, 412 doctoral dissertations on sf subjects.

Mr Nicholls notes that "Fears have been expressed that the academic study of sf will castrate it, just as jazz began to lose its vitality when it became a serious item of musical study", and he admits that "the fears are not entirely groundless; some academics seem rather cynically to have jumped on the bandwagon, and the standards of sf criticism are not notably high", speaking also of "trend-spotters, bandwagon-riders and journalists out to cash in on a good thing". But he concludes that in general, "it is hard to argue, however, that the blasting away of genre sf's ghetto walls has been a bad thing; sf is flourishing in the 1970s as seldom before, and seems to have broadened its range in terms of both form and content".

This sanguine pronouncement is judiciously phrased, and Mr Nicholls and his fellows often go out of their ways to achieve a balance, on their own terms, in discussing writers they do not greatly approve of. But all the same, Mr Nicholls here comes down definitely on one side in the critical argument. It is indeed remarkable that some good sf is still being produced in the circumstances, but the new values imported into the genre, of which this compilation approves, are the dreary old properties of "modernism"—the "serious" (ie, pretentious), "exciting" (ie, excruciating), "inventive" (ie, attitudinizing), "concerned" (ie, self-righteous) stuff which has brought so many arts low: as Philip Larkin says of jazz, Lascaux to Jackson Pollock in one generation. . . .

It is not so much that the contributors are unfair to "hard" sf writers, though the effort to be fair seems often to be somewhat of a strain. But they sometimes find it hard to grasp the subtlety of plain writing. They are good within their limits on Heinlein, Niven and Henry Kuttner, less good on Anderson, Clement, Schmitz. The real distortion lies elsewhere, in their excessive praise and space for the trendy. Harlan Ellison gets as much space as Gordon Dickson and Hal Clement put together, Samuel Delany as much as Frank Herbert and James Schmitz together. Stanislaw Lem is grossly overrated, as so often these days: while one's personal sympathies are bound to lie with him, as sf writers the Soviet Arkady and Boris Strugatsky are far more evocative and persuasive.

This view of the criticism proper to be found in this book is, unlike the political and feminist blemishes, a matter of "taste"; and here my sour reservations must not be allowed to conceal the fact that there is a great deal of solid and interesting thinking to be found in these pieces, even if the definitiveness or at least the balance to be hoped for in a work of reference is not achieved.

The trouble is that the editors may think that they are in the position of being able to say to the rest of us, "we have done the work, we have produced an irreplaceable book. Until someone else invests the energy, intelligence, and devotion needed, you are going to have to grit your teeth and swallow our opinions as best you can, or remain ignorant". And, of course, they would be right.

Professor Dowell's Head by Alexander Beliaev, with an introduction by Theodore Sturgeon (157pp. Collier Macmillan. £4.55. 0 02 508370 8) is a prophetic horror story written half a century ago by the most popular of Soviet science fiction writers which foresees organ transplants and mental hospitals used as prisons.

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Kandid thoughts

By C. R. Pike

ARKADY AND BORIS STRUGATSKY :
The Snail on the Slope
243pp. Victor Gollancz. £6.50.
0 575 02795 9
Far Rainbow
Translated from the Russian
by Antonina W. Bouis
The Second Invasion from Mars
Translated from the Russian
by Gary Kern
256pp. Collier Macmillan. £5.75.
0 02 615200 2

The Strugatsky brothers possess a formidable background for the writing of high-calibre science fiction. Arkady is a specialist in English and Japanese literature, Boris a computer expert, specializing in astro-physics. Since the late 1950s, they have gradually fashioned a body of original and enlightened works of speculative literature. Remarkable in their perception of the conflicts between the individual and technology, between man and the universe which may or may not be his, the Strugatsky's stories and novels have achieved a unique status within Soviet literature and now deserve the attention of Western readers.

In his informative introduction to *The Snail on the Slope* Darko Suvin shows how the Strugatskys have developed from a "future history" series (centred on *Noon: 22nd century*), in which barely realistic young people adventured and heroed their way through a classless, contented and only slightly mysterious universe, to a more thoughtful period (of which *Far Rainbow* and *Hard to be a God* are the best examples) in which they explore the price man pays for his mastery of things. After 1965, however, the Strugatskys parabolize their now darker consciousness into fantastic realities of which *The Second Invasion from Mars* is a part and *The Snail on the Slope* the summit. Recently, they have changed tack again into an updated, sophisticated reality, as evidenced by *Roadside Picnic*, recently published by Penguin.

Of the three works reviewed here, *Far Rainbow* is the most satisfying as straightforward science fiction. Well-intentioned, but monomaniac scientists corrupt a tranquil planet with their "zero-T" experiments which finally release the lethal black Wave. The Strugatskys here quickly build a neat plot into a powerful Dostoevskyan climax of debate and choice, as to whether the children, the results of the scientists' experiments or the paintings and sculptures of the artists' colony are to fill the starship on its last departure from Rainbow.

The Second Invasion from Mars is an ironic, neo-Gogolian and anti-heroic revision of Wells. The weapons of the unseen aliens' now successful conquest are bribery and rumour. What they want is not "dead souls", but gastric juice, which they persuade the bovine masses to donate in exchange for money. The idea is amusing and the narrator a typically Russian busybody in the "skaz" tradition, but both the ideas and the humour are over-exposed in a story whose lines will be clear to most readers half-way through.

The Snail on the Slope, on the other hand, is a fantastic vision of extraordinary power, a difficult, demanding but rewarding work. Pepper is an outsider in the lunatic Directorate which is somehow responsible for the preservation *and* eradication of the Forest, Kandid a pilot now marooned in the Forest with its strange, childlike inhabitants. Pepper's efforts to escape to the Forest immure him in the Directorate, while Kandid's attempted journey back to the Directorate results only in a new isolation.

The Strugatskys are not afraid to leave many questions unanswered. They write inscrutably of god-like "Maidens" reproduced by a lake, of zombie "deadlings", of lilac clouds which manufacture creatures in a Forest which is in a constant turmoil of vegetable or animal consumption and which seems to be the site of a war, or an enormous, but dislocated experiment, or both. Equally obscure, however, is the superficially rational work of the Directorate, with its unrevealed purposes, impenetrable Kafkaesque bureaucracy and meaningless directives. Both Pepper and Kar placed in situations of impasse: Pepper, as he atte understand the Directorate's terminology, or the Director's taneously polyphonic speech, Kandid, as he struggles to ber his native language aga stupefying jabber of the people. Pepper ultimately su to the discourse of the Direc whereas Kandid finally rega trol of his thoughts and be but they serve only to artic himself his alienation....

The Strugatskys warn of dangerous complacency and deficient understandings of Other, as phenomena, people, societies. In the title epi and in the sub-text of the they compare man's journey unknowing to unknowing, to of a snail mounting the slope Mount Fuji to its summit. Ma the snail are on a journey w the traveller's knowledge of territory behind and around is as precariously minimal and biguous as that of the ground yond him. The journey is ine able, its accomplishment will the supreme triumph, one day the mountain will be revealed as a whole, "from above and from the side" as Kandid concludes, but until then there are no consolations. The sickeningly physical [illegible] of the Strugatskys' worlds, the apparently unresolvable mysteries and dangers, as well as the comparison of their parables unquestionable revolution tatorship (although equally in the mindless passivity of democratic populations) obviously leave the Strugatskys open to attack within the Soviet Union. What is encouraging is that although they have been attacked, they have also been defended. They have stimulated an authentic debate on values and the approach of literature to individual and collective life, a debate in which the weight of both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* has been felt. The English translators of the present works have obviously been faced with enormous problems, as a result of which there is sometimes a disparity in the English text between fluent, graphic narrative and stumbling, literal dialogue, but this should not and does not mask the impressive edifice which the Strugatskys have created.

Fems and fillies

By Michael Rosen

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273pp. Gollancz. £5.95.
0 575 02766 5

It is a familiar enough post-disaster scene: the land is poisoned; on the coast a community ekes out a living, its economy based on the cultivation of seaweed, its social structure accordingly regressed. In Suzy McKee Charnas's *Walk to the End of the World* the descendants of the military élite have emerged from their shelters to found the Holdfast, a truly repellent combination of grid-iron squad, public school and SS *Totenkopfverband*. At the top of the system the Seniors compete for prestige and "game points", collective drug orgies promote social cohesion, and coercion is exercised brutally and directly by psychopathic addicts, the Rovers. The subhuman caste which is held responsible for the fall of ancient civilization is excluded from even this nightmare of a social order: women, the "fems". The men believe that they are only waiting their opportunity to reintroduce their corruption (!) into the Holdfast.

Rover Captain Kelmz is sent to track down Eykar Bek, a renegade priest who is in breach of the Holdfast's deepest kinship taboo: he knows the identity of his own father. But Kelmz agrees a truce with Bek and his lover, and the three set off in search of Bek's father. With them they have Alldera, a fem who is being sent as a messenger to the "free fems", reputed to live in the wilds beyond the Holdfast.

Although, as it follows their progress, *Walk to the End of the World* spells out Holdfast life in all its sordid and gruesome detail, it fails to convince. Ecologically the Holdfast is a scandal: a subsistence economy drains its few resources to preserve a status system which, in turn, keeps it wildly inefficient. Clearly if it survives it is because it meets dark psychological needs in its members. Here is where one would have expected the cutting edge of Ms Charnas's feminist criticism to bite home. But it does not, because the Holdfasters' psychology never really becomes plausible. They are too matter-of-fact, too resolutely unalien, to be denizens of the paranoiac myth-world appropriate to their vile system. "You romanticize yourself", one accuses another: it is so commonplace that it's incredible.

When Ms Charnas tries to convey the quality of her characters' experience it comes across as flattened and banal. This is how Alldera reacts to a conversation with Bek: "This was her first experience of speech as self-expression with any degree of complexity, eliciting responses of similar quality." The bathos of the contemporary jargon is inadvertently comic, but it also indicates a general problem for science fiction writers, like Ms Charnas, with serious moral ambitions: the impossibility of incorporating into science fiction that conventional novelistic ideal, the representation of character by the description of experience. Since the very point of the genre lies in the *distance* between the characters' and the reader's circumstances it is surely artificial to imagine a common language mediating between them. A generation ago science fiction ignored the difficulty and simply universalized its Middle American values (which it believed, quaintly, were "post-ideological") without hesitation. *Walk to the End of the World* is least satisfactory when it does the same with the clichés of 1960s humanism: "self-expression" for self-aggrandizement.

Motherlines, its sequel, is an altogether less demanding and more enjoyable book. Alldera flees from the Holdfast and reaches an all-female plains society of escaped fems and nomadic horse-women—parthenogenetic results of pre-disaster biology. The writing loosens perceptibly as Ms Charnas sets her heroine cantering about in an orgy of romps, crushes and tiffs. Plains life is a pony club utopia. Hippophilia—the love that dare not whinny its name—is brought boldly into the open when we are let into the secret of the horse-women's reproductive systems. But otherwise it is an innocent gymkhana heaven: no men; no children (they raise themselves, conveniently, in "childpacks"); promiscuity without jealousy; adventure without recrimination. The women's attitudes to one another have a true schoolgirl flavour, too, mixed from prissiness and malice. Daya, an escaped fem, looks at the band's leader:

> Even in the soft, flattering light her skin showed creases at the corner of her mouth and eyes, and gray streaked her hair. In her broad, handsome face her eyes were perfect, brilliant and enormous. Daya envied her those eyes. She did not envy Elnoa's eminence; influence, she knew, was subtler and more versatile than authority.

Ripping Yarns for Girls? Undoubtedly. But, having escaped from the horrors of the Holdfast, who would deny them a little light relief?

The Unman: Kovrigin's Chronicles, by Vadim Shefner (Introduction by Theodore Sturgeon. 233pp. Collier Macmillan. £5.95.) is one of the titles in Macmillan's *Best of Soviet Science Fiction* series (see also *Far Rainbow/The Second Invasion from Mars*, reviewed above). *The Unman* is translated by Alice and Alexander Nakhimovsky, and offers "a passage into a world . . . that we are almost certain exists, yet one we seldom have a chance to visit"; *Kovrigin's Chronicles*, translated by Antonina W. Bouis, takes us forward into the twenty-second century to dramatize "the eternal pursuit of dreams".

I'm Chmeee, *rishathra* me

By Galen Strawson

ARRY NIVEN :
ingworld Engineers
7pp. Gollancz. £6.50.
575 02791 6

Ringworld Engineers is a most ingenious and absorbing book. But as a sequel to *Ringworld*, published ten years ago, it is something of a disappointment. Perhaps this is because its origins are so unusual. As Larry Niven says in his Dedication, "I hadn't the slightest intention of writing a sequel to *Ringworld*".

The reason he did so is that the letters about *Ringworld* kept on coming in. The Ringworld is just that: a million miles wide, 190 million miles in diameter, built around a sun. "Shadow squares" circle the sun on an inner orbit, creating areas of night and day at regular intervals around the ring; the inner surface of the ring is "terraformed", the underside fashioned of *scrith*, a material of incredible strength.

It set a lot of people thinking. "A Florida high school class determined the need for the spillpipe system." "From a Cambridge professor came an estimate for the minimum tensile strength of *scrith*." "From all directions came news of the need for attitude jets." "Freeman Dyson (Freeman Dyson!) has no trouble believing in the Ringworld (!), but can't see why the engineers wouldn't have built a lot of little ones instead. Safer. I believe I've answered that question in this book."

Niven, then, wrote *Ringworld Engineers* partly to answer questions and partly to incorporate details not of his own imagining; and it is for this reason, perhaps, that it lacks the narrative unity of *Ringworld* and, indeed, of Niven's other works. It has something of the travelogue about it, developing jerkily, incident by incident, as Louis Wu, and Chmeee—the super-feline alien Kzinti—heroes of *Ringworld*, encounter one hominid species after another in their explorations. The incidents often seem set up to provide frames for the imparting of information about Ringworld's construction; so that although they are individually well conceived and executed, and jointly testify to Niven's remarkable powers of imagination, they fail to develop smoothly into one another.

Pierson's Puppeteers, flute-voiced two-headed aliens, feature in many of Niven's books. Although they are mortal, they can stay alive indefinitely so long as they don't have accidents. Unsurprisingly, they are intensely cautious, and intensely inventive when it comes to thinking up safety devices. The second trip to the Ringworld starts when the Hindmost, a former leader of the puppeteers, kidnaps Louis Wu and Chmeee and forces them to find out how the Ringworld works—how safe it is. Arriving, they find it badly offcentre: the attitude jets that keep it steady have been "cannibalized" by one of the more intelligent resident species, and used to drive spaceships. Louis and Chmeee work out who must have built the Ringworld, postulate the existence of a repair centre, and start searching.

A very great deal goes instructively wrong. Our views about the origins of *homo sapiens* are massively revised. We find out what happened to Teela Brown, the girl picked by the Puppeteers for the original trip to the Ringworld because she had luck in her genes, bred in over generations.

We meet a descendant (more or less) of the original Ringworld engineers, the Pak protectors, skewered on a moral dilemma: on the one hand, it knows that ninety-five per cent of the inhabitants of the Ringworld can be saved for the loss of five per cent, and is enough of a utilitarian to value this outcome. On the other hand, it is as a Protector constitutionally incapable of doing away with the five per cent. The way it solves its problem is to win by losing while genuinely trying not to lose.

The book is alive with detail. There is *rishathra*, sex between species; there are silver-haired vampires with supercharged pheromones; there are shadow farms and flying cities, quantities of different social forms and incompatible social *mores*. Faults of construction cease to matter in the steady stream of invention. This is in part a guidebook to (a minute fragment of) the Ringworld, but it's a guidebook that was needed. No one should read *Ringworld Engineers* who has not read *Ringworld* and all who have read *Ringworld* will have to read *Ringworld Engineers*—if only to follow the fortunes of lucky Miss Teela Brown; and to find out whose luck it really was that underlay her astonishing indestructibility.

The Queen of Mars, not yet overthrown by the visiting Soviet astronauts who start a revolution in the 1924 Russian expressionist SF film Aelita. *The still comes from* The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, *reviewed on page 1263.*

Ayesha, *She*, earth-aliens *et al*

By Steven Kupfer

RICHARD COWPER :
The Web of the Magi
160pp. Gollancz. £5.50
0 575 02810 6
CHRISTOPHER EVANS :
Capella's Golden Eyes
219pp. Faber. £5.95.
0 517 11513 6

Fashionable notions about human development find an echo in Richard Cowper's collection of stories: Technological civilization is to be renounced or transcended. The way forward is through intuition or the kind of deliberate illogic expressed in Zen riddles. But the ideas are not always well considered.

"Drink Me Francesca" begins with the interesting hypothesis that the crews of twentieth-century space missions reflect a debased image of humanity, the ideal of institutionalized aggression prized by the rulers of the Pentagon. But the story degenerates into vagueness when a man of sensibility slips past the screening procedure, voyages to a distant planet, and has a transcendental experience which puts him in touch with the great ones of the universe, the immaterial, "communion of the meta-psychic". From them he learns that mankind's technological path leads to self-destruction, and redemption is possible only if we give up rational thought and cultivate our long-suppressed, vestigial intuition. In another story the instrument of human redemption is Kulire, a board-game in Japanese style. Again, it derives from higher beings on a distant planet, and its purpose is to educate us in the nature of the universe and the powers that govern it.

The novella-length title story, "The Web of the Magi", described on the jacket as "reminiscent of Rider Haggard", is all too fatally like *She*. Certainly, Ayesha's realm has been moved to the North West Frontier; Holly and Leo Vincey have been squeezed into Ormond, a lone Englishman, who is both the inquiring observer and the long-awaited lover. But Anahita, like Ayesha, is an ageless woman of extraordinary beauty. She too lives in an intricate cave palace, built by a long-vanished civilization; and rules over the primitive descendants of its people. The powerful, sexual charge of *She* is, however, absent—though Ormond beds Anahita.

Christopher Evans's first novel appears to be a straight adventure story about a human colony on a distant planet, mysterious aliens from an advanced civilization and a revolt against a burgeoning dictatorship. Its hero is a man of old-fashioned virtues whose faith in the local status quo takes a lot of undermining. The ingredients of *Capella's Golden Eyes* are unpromisingly conventional and the plot is a bit weak; but the novel's outstanding merit is its detailed and solid realization of life in the colony, a city state with small, outlying communities.

Even the profound implausibility in the novel is an interesting feature. One can accept the premise that the planet is so far from Earth that communication has been impossible since the colony's foundation a century before. But this does not justify or explain the excision of Earth from the consciousness of the colonists. Of course, they know they come from Earth and that the original expedition was an Anglo-American enterprise. But the inevitable scars of a colonial condition, incompleteness, dependence on a distant model, the sense of a connection broken, are all unaccountably absent. There is no colonial consciousness. There is, however, dependence and consequent resentment, which is focused on the M'threnni, the mysterious, humanoid aliens, who arrived on the planet a year after the human settlers. They supply the colony with scarce raw materials in exchange for a base in the city, where they live shut away, hardly ever seen, never communicating. Each alien acquires a human companion, a "voice", who, once chosen, leaves the M'threnni enclave only to die.

The novel's energies are invested in the M'threnni, in the mystery of their nature and purposes, and in the struggle against the increasingly despotic city government. Then, abruptly, they depart, leaving the "voices" behind them and the mystery unsolved. They have detected the approach of a ship from Earth. An expedition has been mounted by the hyper-Stalinist Pan-Asian Confederation which now dominates Earth; its purpose is to bring the colony into line. There, rather in mid-air, the novel ends.

Is Christopher Evans saying that the true aliens are from Earth and the colonists had nothing to fear from the M'threnni? The answer is unclear and the confusion isn't helped by the hero's final speculation about the catatonic, tranced condition of the abandoned "voices". He suggests that the M'threnni are supremely rational beings who damaged the "voices" only accidentally, in the process of trying to eradicate humanity's base emotions.

The fate of the Heechee

By Michael Draper

FREDERIK POHL :
Beyond the Blue Event Horizon
327pp. Gollancz. £5.95.
0 575 02794 0

An expedition sent from our world of diminishing material resources to a mysterious food factory in outer space discovers there a fifteen-year-old boy who has never seen another human being, and a machine for projecting fantasies. The oldest member of the party attempts to use the projector to blackmail Earth. He ends by imposing on the rest of the human race the experience of the heart attack which kills him. His fellows, meanwhile, press on to another alien artefact, where they find a race bred from apemen, and the computer-stored minds of missing space explorers. On Earth, the expedition's employer alternates between taking legal action to keep control of these potentially very profitable oddities and speculating about the alien beings responsible for their existence, the Heechee.

This is the barest outline of what happens in Frederik Pohl's *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon*. Science fiction enthusiasts are going to enjoy it. To the uninitiated it may be recommended as an example of how ingenious in content and how accomplished in presentation science fiction can be. The temptation to make greater claims for the book has to be resisted, however.

As in most science fiction, the author's preoccupation with ideas operates to the detriment of characterization. Usually this doesn't matter. But Pohl's book tries to include human interest as a central feature, and the slickly vulgar combination of sex and psychology he offers is weak. The only memorable character in the book is "Albert Einstein"—not the late genius but a computer programme which delivers engaging science lectures through a three-dimensional picture of its namesake.

Pohl has written in his autobiography that "when you invent a new society you make a political statement about the one you live in", a view supported by his justly celebrated short story "The Tunnel under the World". His new book shows us global poverty and a profit-oriented medical system requiring the sale of organs by the poor, but surprisingly neither of these is put into any critical perspective. Nor is the social position of the central character — a dynamic, fabulously wealthy entrepreneur, aptly named Broadhead—who finally becomes (as the heading of the penultimate chapter puts it), "The Richest Person There Is".

There is an unfavourable contrast here with *Gateway*, an award-winning book by Pohl to which this is the sequel. In *Gateway* the same main character, Broadhead, sought riches in outer space but only achieved them through the sacrifice of other people—including his lover—whom he had to leave marooned in a black hole. As the story was recounted to us, Broadhead descended into inner space as well, discovering (rather stagily, to be sure) there could be no escape from his guilt. Some works of science fiction, and some of supposed science fact, envisage mankind redeemed by creatures from the stars. In *Gateway* the god-like Heechee never appeared in person. They just left artefacts for us to puzzle over and experiment with, some of them highly dangerous.

In the sequel, perhaps because Broadhead's aggrandizement is so plainly evasive as a conclusion, Pohl devotes a final chapter to what became of the Heechee. This change of subject supplies the book with an acceptable climax, but at the cost of relinquishing the human standpoint and depriving the Heechee of their mythic resonance.

These limitations need to be highlighted because the book will be praised unreservedly in science fiction circles and its good qualities are impressive enough to invite serious attention. Pohl is a compelling storyteller who can render a high-technology world of the future intelligible to the ordinary reader because he knows how to expound ideas and dispose information with complete clarity. *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon* is an adroit, informed, and highly entertaining performance.

Onward to Alhanroel

By Patrick Parrinder

ROBERT SILVERBERG :
Lord Valentine's Castle
444p. Victor Gollancz. £6.95.
0 575 02792 4

Four years ago Robert Silverberg was reported to have renounced SF, but here he is bouncing back again with what is billed as a "science fiction novel of epic proportions". The jacket description should not be taken too literally. True, there are in *Lord Valentine's Castle* synthetic horses, floating hovercars, and a citadel thirty miles high with an artificial climate. Yet Silverberg's Majipoor, where humanity (together with a variety of other space-wandering races) finds its future home, is about about as science-fictional as Tolkien's Middle Earth.

Blessedly short of hydrocarbons, Majipoor is an archaic, feudal empire in which the common people go in awe of their masters. Valentine, an itinerant juggler, discovers through dreams and portents that he is his namesake Lord Valentine, the Coronal or king—his body and throne having been stolen by a usurper. He is quite content with his new body, which (by an oversight, it would seem) the usurper has allowed to be blond and handsome. Once the dreams have awakened his sense of responsibility, however, he sets out, after a show of reluctance, to win his throne back. Strangers and colleagues bow down before his inherent majesty and become his servitors and henchmen: "My lord", breathes the plebeian Carabella, his favourite.

Starting out as an adventure-story, *Lord Valentine's Castle* becomes more in the nature of a triumphal procession. Valentine and his companions trek across the forests and plains of Zimroel, and then by fishing-boat across the ocean, with a brief interlude inside a sea-dragon's belly. From the Isle of Sleep, dwelling-place of the Lady his mother, the crusade goes on ("Onward, Onward, Onward", as Silverberg would put it) to Alhanroel with its Labyrinth and then to the heights of power at Castle Mount. Any allegorical reading of this journey eastwards needs to start with the fact that its author lives in California.

Silverberg's invention is prodigious throughout. The early sections, traversing Zimroel and the ocean, are a near-encyclopaedia of unnatural wonders and weird ecosystems. I suspect this book breaks all records in the coinage of new species. Alhanroel is equally rich in cities, in institutional forms, and in lists of Coronals and other dignitaries, most of them there for the sheer pleasure of naming. A land of ruins dating back to the time of the metamorphs or aboriginal inhabitants of Majipoor, Alhanroel is also a sophisticated political culture which the born-again Valentine, reinvigorated by his life among the commoners, must learn to mould to his own ends.

The novel is transparent enough in its premises—which include a curiously unAmerican endorsement of the divine right of kings. How much easier to have to choose between the blond Lord Valentine and the foul, black-bearded usurper than between, say, President Carter and Governor Reagan! Yet juggling, the art by which Valentine demonstrates his mastery of the popular touch, is also an apt metaphor for Silverberg's management of his heroic romance. Will the little band of comrades survive the rigours of their journey? Will the Powers of Majipoor come to acknowledge our outcast hero? What parts will the morose Skandar, the sinister Hjort and the wily Vroon have to play? Will the metamorphs get the last laugh? There are times when we feel, like Valentine himself, caught up in "some vast and bewildering drama, the climactic scenes of which were still far away in space and time". Yet Silverberg, like a competent juggler, maintains his rhythm and his suspense act to the end.

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Of traffic and turnpike trusts

By F. M. L. Thompson

W. J. READER :
Macadam
The McAdam Family and the Turnpike Roads, 1798-1861
248pp. Heinemann. £8.95.
0 434 62502 7

It must be admitted that roads lack instant appeal. They have always attracted, and continue to attract, complaints about their neglected condition, their inadequacy, and their cost, and a diligent search would be needed to discover much in the way of favourable comment let alone positive admiration of their strength and beauty. It is true that road vehicles, preferably sporty, veteran, or obsolete, have their admirers, but these have a lowly place in the nostalgia league alongside steam trains, while the sense of romance and adventure is reserved almost entirely for railway-lines and canals.

Their praises may have gone unsung, yet, as historians have begun to remind us, the roads carried traffic which grew substantially and often rapidly, at least from the early seventeenth century onwards, traffic that was vital to economic and social life. It grew while inland waterways flourished, because water and road were serving distinct markets for the long-distance transport of people and goods, within which each had fairly clear advantages of cost, speed, or flexibility; it grew right through the railway age, because road transport adapted to a complementary, non-competing, feeder role for the railways with which it could not compete over distances; and it goes without saying that it has grown at immense speed in the age of the automobile.

Throughout this long period, until the construction of the first motorway in this country in the 1950s, *the predominant* tendency was to try to make the traffic fit the existing roads, by regulation of the size and design of wheels, by taxation policy, by parking regulations, and by traffic engineering. There was one short interlude, in the early nineteenth century, when a few shrewd and determined people turned things upside down and tried to make the roads fit for the existing traffic, an interlude that produced a rare outburst of enthusiastic comment from French and German travellers, who could hardly find the superlatives to express their admiration of the best roads in the world, magnificent smooth highways along which mail coaches whisked "swiftly and without any vibration" and with exemplary punctuality. It is about this interlude that W. J. Reader has written, in his business biography of the McAdam family.

John London McAdam came to the roads late in life, at the age of sixty, after an unlucky and rather unsuccessful career first as a fledgling merchant in colonial New York and then as a businessman in Scotland, engaged in distilling tar from coal—for use on ships' bottoms, not in tarmacadam, which came a full century later, recognizing by its name the contribution he had made both to the English language and to the techniques of road-making.

He had no particular reason for embarking on his third career, which brought him eminence and affluence, apart from a Scotsman's natural belief that ineffective and incompetent road repairs were a scandalous waste of the travelling public's money, and a single-minded conviction of missionary proportions that he had discovered the one true way of making acceptable and durable road surfaces. Unbounding confidence in his own abilities and indispensability, by no means entirely unwarranted, rapidly carried him to the top in a sphere of semi-public administration so ill-considered and so peopled with amateur bumble-heads that such an ascent was not difficult. It made him into a rarely questioned authority, and enabled him to set up a tidy dynasty by placing most of his sons and grandsons in the new profession of road surveyor. It was not McAdam's fault that this turned almost as rapidly into a dead-end profession, sliding into fifty years of oblivion as the main roads themselves slid into an inferior or non-existent role in the transport system of the railway age.

It is perhaps surprising that a figure so renowned in his day should hitherto have failed to attract a full-length study, and been saddled with nothing better than a garbled and inaccurate *DNB* entry. Mr Reader modestly claims that the reason for this oversight is that roads vanished from the public gaze soon after McAdam's death, and hence that he was quickly forgotten. This will hardly do when educated Englishmen could be assumed to know what words like macadam and macadamize meant, and when, as this book points out, even readers of the *Daily Mail* in 1905 were expected to understand a comment that "the main principles which the famous Macadam [sic] taught" had been abandoned. The real reason is that the sources for a biography are limited to the minute-books of turnpike trusts and the evidence given to a parliamentary committee considering McAdam's claim for a reward for his services to the public, and it requires someone of Mr Reader's skill and experience to make a lively and attractive account out of such unpromising materials.

This he contrives to do, deftly extracting the last drop of juice from these inherently dry, impersonal, and limited records, so that McAdam comes more than half alive as an individual. Only for the past twenty years of his life, it should be said, since little is known about his first sixty years and even the bare facts of how he had spent those were suppressed or blurred in the account he gave of his own life to the select committee in 1823. As for his private and family life the records are virtually silent, although his clannishness comes out in the way in which he advanced his sons and grandsons, both because it was natural to look to them as trusty and reliable deputies even if they had no previous knowledge of roads, and because it was natural for the head of a family to look after his own. What emerges is not a very likeable character: full of drive and vigour—he held surveyorships to eighteen separate turnpike trusts between 1816 and his death in 1836, and married his second wife, who was thirty years younger than himself, at the age of seventy-one—he was determined, autocratic, pleased with himself, resentful of criticism, not a little grasping and contemptuous of traditional highway administrators. Just the sort of man to get things done.

It is as a business historian that Reader tells us what McAdam did get done and he throws in for good measure a welcome, if brief, account of the work of McAdam's most successful son, James, who amassed sixty-four surveyorships and a knighthood for his services as general surveyor to the most important road authority of the times, the newly-formed Commission for the Metropolis Turnpike Roads North of the Thames, which in 1826 placed 131 miles of the busiest roads in the world, previously operated by fourteen independent trusts, under unified management. The account of the basic road-making technique for macadamizing—laying a foot-thick bed of small angular stones, evenly sized and none larger than a walnut, to be consolidated into a smooth, durable surface simply by the passage of traffic—brings out splendidly the pedantic quality in McAdam's attention to detail in his insistence that it was quite impossible for stone-breakers to break stones to the required smallness and uniformity unless they worked sitting down and used short-handled hammers; an erect stone-breaker wielding a sledge-hammer was liable to find himself without a job.

The main message of the book, however, is to emphasize the managerial content of the "McAdam system", whose adoption was unfailingly recommended to every trust that consulted the great man.

This, with its insistence on the employment of a full-time, decently-paid, professional surveyor by every trust, the subdivision of large trusts into properly defined sub-districts with sub-surveyors, and the direct employment and close supervision of all road labour, involving the ending of the traditional system of subcontracting road repairs, was undoubtedly the secret of success. McAdam, after all, was not an engineer, he did not construct new roads or build magnificent bridges like Telford; but he was a great administrator, and it is right to lay stress on the novelty and efficiency of his methods of road management.

At the same time, if a whole book is to be devoted to this subject, it is unfortunate that a business historian's understandable preoccupation with the application of embryonic techniques of business management to highway maintenance, should have been allowed to crowd out quite so completely the questions which interest economic, social, and technological historians. Thus, while there is discussion of the finances of individual turnpike trusts, showing that some part of McAdam's economies consisted of asset-stripping (for a while he dispensed with purchasing new supplies of road materials by digging up the existing roads, breaking down the large stones to the right size, and re-using them), there is no extended discussion of the relation of the turnpiked roads to the eighty per cent of national road mileage that remained unturnpiked, nor any real evaluation of the benefits to the travelling public of macadamized turnpikes.

Did the public get cheaper, as well as faster, travel, or were the advantages taken out in the improved ratios between receipts from tolls and operating expenses of macadamized turnpikes, and in their improved chances of paying off accumulated debt, in comparison with turnpikes which remained unmacadamized? Traffic needs, particularly those of the Post Office, with its interest in speeding up the mails, provided the demand for better road surfaces, and it would be interesting to know whether, anticipating the modern motorways, the improved roads generated fresh traffic to occupy the enhanced capacity, and whether traffic grew more rapidly on macadamized than on unmacadamized roads. Historians of technology might usefully have been reminded that Sweden developed macadamized roads without benefit of McAdam some years before he launched his system; they would certainly welcome a more probing examination of Telford's criticism of McAdam's bland assurance that no foundations of any sort were needed for his layer of small stones—some impression of how McAdam's roads looked after half a century of neglect, but also half a century without much traffic, as compared with Telford's own roads, might be a starting-point.

All in all, this is a good book and a readable one, but not quite wide enough in its approach to become indispensable reading for students of the period unless they have a specialized interest in the history of road transport.

The patterns of landscape

By E. M. J. Campbell

P. D. A. HARVEY :
The History of Topographical Maps
199pp. Thames and Hudson. £15.
0 500 24105 8

The title of P. D. A. Harvey's book is misleading. It suggests that this is *a history* of the topographical map whereas, as he makes clear in the first sentence of his introduction, it is really "about the early development of topographical mapping". By "early" he means produced before the end of the sixteenth century; and he looks back in time to the third millennium BC. There are also occasional references to cartographic delineations after the sixteenth century AD.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary's first definition of topography (dating from 1549) defines it as "The science or practice of describing a particular place, city, town, manor, parish, or tract of land." Professor Harvey's definition of a topographical map is as broad. For him it is "a large-scale map, one that sets out to convey the shape and pattern of landscape, showing a tiny portion of the earth's surface as it lies within one's own direct experience, and quite distinct from the small-scale maps" that show "the features of whole provinces, nations and continents". For him topographical mapping seems also to be synonymous with local mapping (page 7) and he includes town-plans, estate maps and road-books within his study.

Professor Harvey is a historian. Cartographers and geographers generally use the term "topographical map" in a more limited sense to the exclusion of such items as these. For them "a topographical map is one constructed upon a scale sufficiently large to admit of the representation not only of all conspicuous objects situated upon the Earth's surface but likewise of its inequalities", the definition first given in English in 1822 by William Siborn (a lieutenant in the British army). The "modern" topographical map is first discernible in the eighteenth century—a century of almost continuous warfare on a continental scale in mainland Europe and one in which military commanders needed detailed maps for the movement and quartering of their troops. The design of the modern topographical map was a response to military necessity and was essentially the work of military engineers and surveyors.

Harvey's book also has a sub-title: "symbols, pictures and surveys" and these three words indicate the strands in the "early" history of topographical mapping taken in his broad sense. Indeed they form the titles of the three parts into which his book is divided: Part 1, Symbols; Part 2, Pictures (including early town-plans, bird's-eye views, and picture-maps, the last including developments in medieval Europe, the Far East, Mexico and India); Part 3, Surveys. This arrangement causes him sometimes to refer to the same examples in more than one part of his book.

The book is "addressed to two audiences", to the "non-specialist general reader" on the one hand and the "specialist historian of cartography" on the other. Harvey describes his work as "essentially an essay in interpretation, not a work of primary research" and so he does not footnote his references but, at the end, he lists, in just over four triple-columned pages, the authorities he has consulted. As befits a book published by Thames and Hudson, it is amply illustrated, with ten beautiful colour plates and 106 monochrome ones—some of these illustrations are reproduced for the first time in a general history of this kind.

Harvey ranges widely in his discussion of the early development of local mapping, including the "cartographic" efforts of unsophisticated peoples such as American Indians, Eskimoes and Marshall Islanders, as well as those of more advanced societies such as Babylon, Classical Greece and Rome, ancient China and feudal Japan. It is difficult to pinpoint innovation and even more difficult to trace diffusion, as Harvey recognizes. I believe, for example, that he underestimates the continuity in estate and local mapping in Western Christendom from the Roman period to the ninth century AD. The fact that little if no work survives from that period does not necessarily mean that none was produced.

Harvey's volume is one to be dipped into rather than read at a single sitting. It is packed full of facts, and the "general reader" may well find it a little indigestible unless he mulls it over at leisure. Many a so-called "specialist historian of cartography" will wish that he had a "hot line" to the author so that he might discuss with him many of his interpretations. The book contains many generalizations which need qualification, such as, for example, a statement (page 164) that at the beginning of the sixteenth century "mapping was the work of the artist, by the end of the century it had passed into the hands of the surveyor". Each of these professions had different functions; few artists had the skill to draw a topographical map, even an imprecisely surveyed one. Or again when, nearly at the end of his book (page 172) Harvey asks "Just what, after all, is a map?" and goes on to write ". . . until this emergence of the surveyed map, drawn (or intended to be drawn) to a uniform scale, there was no such thing as a topographical map. What we have done in this book is to call maps those representations of landscape that seem to lie in a line of development (typological, not necessarily historical) leading to the real topographical map".

But still, Professor Harvey is to be congratulated on telling a well-known story in a fresh and essentially individual way.

Vitreous matter

By R. J. Hunter

RUTH HURST VOSE :
Glass
221pp. Collins £12.95.
0 00 211379 1

Traditionally, works on glass have been aimed at the specialist reader as collector, historian or technologist, and a good general work on the different aspects of glass has been long overdue. The balance is a difficult one to achieve, but Ruth Hurst Vose has met with a reasonable degree of success. *Glass* is packed with facts and includes a helpful glossary of terms for the uninitiated. The first five chapters cover the definition of glass and the origins of glass-making, and examine the evolution of glass-making in Britain and on the Continent from earliest times until the twentieth century. The interested or general reader for whom the book is intended is offered a deluge of information, some of it perhaps expressed too succinctly. In addition to which, several chapters overlap in covering the history and evolution of glass-making and this may at times be confusing.

But *Glass* provides an excellent background to the subject. There are useful sections on early techniques and methods and on the production of coloured glasses. Raw materials are examined in some detail although the change to "forest" glasses, which archaeology is now beginning to elucidate, could have been given more attention. Early texts from the Mesopotamian tablets, through Theophilus to Neri, get as much space as the book's size allows and there is also a relatively detailed coverage of English and Continental late medieval and early modern glass-making, which is clearly the author's specialist field. The sections on Venetian glass and foreign influences are reasonably full although space is given to the later periods possibly at the expense of the Roman and early medieval periods, where the coverage is thinner.

This is brought out particularly in Chapter 6, which examines the archaeological evidence in Britain. Here the evidence for the earlier periods is sparse, but it could have been balanced by a more detailed investigation of those glass types which are of particular interest to archaeologists. Glass-working, as opposed to glass-making, is covered briefly but the possibility of working sites in the Highlands dating from the Dark Ages could have been brought out more fully, to emphasize a different aspect of the early "industry". There is a long gap between Benedict Biscop in the late seventh century (he now stands to be remembered for monastic glazing rather than anything else) and Vitrearius's activities in the Wealden in the early fourteenth century, a gap to which archaeology alone can hope to provide answers. Much of the chapter rightly dwells on furnaces and techniques, whose evolution is clearly illustrated with plans and reproductions. A sad omission, however, is any extended discussion of window-glass, which means that Ms Vose has little of value to say on the important subject of medieval ecclesiastical buildings.

Types of tyranny

By Peter Lewis

J. M. COETZEE :
Waiting for the Barbarians
156pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.
0 436 10295 1

South Africa may be the world's whipping-boy, but J. M. Coetzee is too intelligent a novelist to cater for moralistic voyeurs. This does not mean that he avoids the social and political crises edging his country towards catastrophe. But he chooses not to handle such themes in the direct, realistic way that writers of older generations, such as Alan Paton, preferred to employ. Instead, Coetzee has developed a symbolic and even allegorical mode of fiction—*not to escape the living nightmare of South Africa but to define the psychopathological underlying the sociological, and in doing so to locate the archetypal in the particular.* He did this in his second novel, the much-acclaimed and prize-winning *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), which, with its doom-laden action of lust, violence, and revenge, resembles Greek Tragedy seen through a glass darkly. He does it rather differently in his less difficult but also less original new novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

Whereas *In the Heart of the Country* had a South African setting, though one so remote that it was as close to Beckettland, the new novel dispenses completely with a specifically South African setting. Coetzee presents an isolated town on the frontier between a nameless Empire and the wild, inhospitable land of the barbarians beyond. Like the Empire, its distant capital, and even the outpost itself, most of the characters, including the magistrate-narrator, remain unnamed, a couple of exceptions being, ironically, inhuman members of the SS-like Third Bureau of the Civil Guard, whose mission it is to suppress the barbarians.

If the place cannot be located on any map, the time, too, as in *In the Heart of the Country*, is impossible to pinpoint. The soldiers ride on horseback, wear breastplates, use muskets: the torturers are old-fashioned in their techniques, lacking sophisticated modern gadgetry. Yet the Third Bureau and its chief representative, Colonel Joll (very far from jolly), belong to twentieth-century totalitarianism, being imaginary equivalents of the Gestapo, the KGB, and numerous other organizations dedicated to ensuring the health of the State. What Coetzee is interested in is the abuse of power, the state's need for victims and enemies, and the predicament of the liberal conscience, not only in their South African manifestations.

The narrator is a sane liberal suddenly confronted by an authoritarian illiberalism which he cannot contend with and which calls into question the basis of his apparently secure values. His narrative describes the effect of Joll's mission on the quiet town over which he, the ageing magistrate, has presided benevolently and paternalistically *for many years, devoting himself to upholding justice (rather than law and order), to his various scholarly interests and, as l'homme moyen sensuel, to sex.* Far from feeling threatened by the barbarians, the town has achieved a *modus vivendi* with them, and tends to treat them with contempt, from a position of assumed superiority.

With the arrival of Joll, one of "the new men of Empire . . . who believe in fresh starts, new chapters, clean pages", and under special "emergency powers" to counter the supposedly war-mongering barbarians, all this is changed. It is like Angelo's régime after the Duke's lax rule in *Measure for Measure*. The magistrate recognizes this anti-barbarian virulence, resulting in Joll's atrocities, to be an outbreak of mass hysteria arising from deep-rooted anxiety about the alien and unknown rather than a response to a genuine threat. But his easy-going common-sense is no match for Joll's icy zeal, and in spite of his repugnance at Joll's methods and his sympathy for the barbarian victims he initially acquiesces by choosing non-interference rather than resistance.

During one of Joll's absences, the magistrate becomes obsessed with a barbarian girl who has been crippled and partly blinded by Joll's interrogators. His infatuation gives him insight into the quasi-erotic relationship between torturer and tortured, since he sees his own master-servant relationship with the girl, and his yearning to possess her whole being, as analogous to the torturer's desire to penetrate his victim's defences in pursuit of hidden secrets. The liberal magistrate, as a public servant of the Empire, begins to recognize how compromised he is. Later he acknowledges that if Joll is one side of the imperial coin, he is the other: "I was the lie that Empire tells itself when times are easy, he is the truth that Empire tells when harsh winds blow."

After returning the girl to the barbarians during an almost lunatic mission "to repair some of the damage wrought by the forays of the Third Bureau", the magistrate himself is branded as an enemy and subjected to Joll's characteristic attentions. It is at this time that he finally does protest publicly at the hideous cruelty inflicted on barbarian prisoners, although the response to his appeal to common humanity is inevitably violent.

Eventually, with the town abandoned by the Third Bureau and with Joll's punitive expeditionary force reduced to a fleeing rabble by the barbarians, the magistrate is once more in charge as the remaining inhabitants await the barbarians. The atmosphere of collapse and disintegration, as though a new Dark Age is at hand, resembles that of recent prophetic fiction such as Doris Lessing's *Memoirs of a Survivor*.

Waiting for the Barbarians belongs to that twentieth-century sub-genre which Rex Warner helped to popularize in England during the 1930s—the political allegory or fable dealing with modern totalitarianism. It certainly has affinities with Dan Jacobson's *The Confessions of Josef Baisz*, which also creates a fictional country corresponding in some respects to South Africa. In other words, Coetzee's new novel covers well-trodden ground in a way that *In the Heart of the Country* did not; and despite its gripping narrative and moral insight, it does not add substantially to its tradition in the way that Jacobson's book did. Furthermore, this kind of fiction as a whole, peopled as it is mainly by stereotypes, is often in danger of moving so far away from the familiar in its determination to establish universals that it defeats its own purpose. Graham Greene's political novels, which seize on the particular and the "ephemeral", get much closer to the heart of the matter, the human factor.

Degrees of experiment

Robert B. Martin

GEORGE V. HIGGINS :
Kennedy for the Defense
225pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.
0 436 19587 9

Kennedy for the Defense sent me back to the eight previous books George V. Higgins has published in as many years, beginning with *The Friends of Eddie Coyle*. After nearly a decade it is clear that he has not changed the crime novel as his early reviewers expected. Readers who made his acquaintance with his first book will be relieved that he is back at home in the sleazy, dangerous, dirty-talking Boston underworld, returned from his invasion of Washington and the recreation of the Watergate atmosphere in *A City on a Hill* and in the scarcely less fictional *The Friends of Richard Nixon*. Nor can anyone be sorry that he is no longer attempting the upper-crust life of *Dreamland*, a conventional novel giving no hint of his special talents.

Ambience is always more important than action to Mr Higgins, who tells his latest story from the point of view of a hustling Irish-American sharpy lawyer with the irrelevantly jokey name of Jeremiah F. Kennedy (Higgins nudges the reader in the ribs with the initials). Kennedy has among his clients a lovable and philosophical car-thief, a boat-mechanic who is apparently innocently involved in drug running, and a supercilious homosexual accused of soliciting. Besides these, Kennedy is mixed up with a black pimp, a vicious over-age adolescent, a crooked cop, and other familiar types, all linked loosely by an attenuated and often incomprehensible plot.

Devotees of Higgins read him for dialogue, however, not plot. Although their styles are completely different, he is sometimes reminiscent of Ivy Compton-Burnett in his experiments in narrative, told almost entirely in conversa little connective tissue, in stylized comic language in which the good guys are distinguishable from the ba comparison is more rele it might seem, since the ja us that Higgins took an a degree in literature befo into the law, and his deft carding of the convention crime novel invites his as a serious writer.

But the Compton-Burne are a dangerous precede one without her ability to c world out of pared-down nuance. At his best, Hi wonderfully exact at serving the repetitive rhythms and cated rhetoric of uneducated can speech. And he can be funny, as in the car thief's ation of why it is better to from a man taking a girl to than from one doing his shopping:

> He's gonna sit there. She's sit there. They will have nice wine and look at each and get themselves all over the Indian pudding and got plenty of time to take car. But you never know long it's going to take for a to get a birthday present for wife and a pair of Jockey sh for himself and maybe an cream cone, so you got to quick in a shopping mall.

Characters a step or two up social ladder sound less convinc however, and Mr Higgins ci seems self-indulgent and unselect as in Kennedy's account of the b mechanic's predicament: "The l thinks he's in the shit. He does want to get in the shit. If you getting in the shit, and you do want to get in the shit, you go get a lawyer to get you out of shit." There are two entire chapt of extraneous monologue, serving purpose but apparently there be cause they were fun to write. The are in part fun to read as well, b the total effect is one which Higgins character would no d ascribe to a Chinese dinner: doesn't stick with you.

Inflammations of the head

By Clive Sinclair

CECIL HELMAN :
The Exploding Newspaper
64pp. Menard. £1.95.
0 903400 51 0

In order to make extravagant claims for their product without contravening the strict code that bounds the advertising of alcohol, many drink-manufacturing companies abandon reality for fantasy, arguing that no one could possibly believe that a walking stick would grow into a tree just because its owner is drinking Heineken. Like the aforementioned lager, Cecil Helman's fantastical stories reach parts most others do not.

Coincidentally, a Smirnoff poster showing a beautiful girl necking with a giant tuxedo-clad frog could almost be an illustration for "The Marriage in the Marsh", one of the most striking tales in this collection. The story (or fable, as Helman prefers to call it) is narrated by a simple, concerned father who wants only what is best for his daughter; it is not prejudice, he assures us, that makes him feel his daughter's fiancé is unsuitable—and for her sake, he invites his prospective son-in-law to dinner. The reader, thus far prepared for a variation on the guess-who's-coming-to-dinner theme, and ready to tut-tut at the father's prejudice as a Sidney Poitier lookalike walks into the living room, is slowly fed titbits which suggest that the situation is not quite so straightforward. First we discover that the guest is a vegetarian, then that he is "extremely big", so enormous that he "occupied almost all of the dining room and the lounge". As an afterthought the disturbed father adds that his daughter's fiancé is green: "not bright green, you understand, just a sort of dull olive colour with ugly little green spots all over his body". In time we also learn of his "great muddy footprints" and his refusal to wash off the stinking black marsh-mud that clings to his belly. After a vain attempt to separate the lovers, the father is reluctantly reconciled to his daughter becoming Mrs Brontosaurus.

Helman handles the details of this story with surgical finesse; under his skilful touch, we gradually abandon our acquired knowledge—that the Brontosaurus is extinct—and surrender to the fable's logic. The reader goes under, if you like, into a dream-world where repressed images await ignition. Such an image is not news to Helman. Indeed, it appears a couple of times in the book: in the title story, during which words in newspaper headlines become dangerously real, and in "The Proverb" which, so Helman assures us, contained "within its delicate frame of words . . . ideas powerful enough to burst men's minds into flame". I suspect this may be Helman's secret ambition; to see a street-full of people reading *The Exploding Newspaper* with their heads aflame.

At their best these stories achieve a metaphoric equivalent of this: they awaken the subconscious from its slumber. Some fail. For example, I could not forget while reading "The Marshmallow Rocketship" that chocolate melts. Others are too whimsical. In particular, I was not won over by Helman's ingenious descriptions of the sexual act; euphemisms, however witty, are devices of diffusion and Helman is more dangerous when his images penetrate like laser-beams, as they do, for instance, in "The Psychiatric Anteater", the most brilliant piece in the collection. During the course of this fable the anteater psychiatrist adjusts his patients to the reality of their situation so that, in the end, the ants march happily along his tongue to their death. This is a striking image indeed. Like his brontosaurus, Cecil Helman has brought a welcome whiff of outlandishness to the parochial cottage-industry that passes for contemporary English literature.

In Robert B. Parker's *Wilderness* (241pp. André Deutsch. £5.95. 0 233 97276 5) writer Aaron Newman (really into running, pumps a little iron) witnesses a murder, picks the killer, psychopath Adolph Karl, out of an identity parade, but then backs down and refuses to testify after his wife has been worked over by Karl's hired help. To heal his wounded honour Newman with his wife and a friend (black belt in karate, can bench-press 375lbs) follow Karl and his associates up into Maine, and then hunt him down through the woods. Although this version of an archetypal American myth is exciting enough, at times the author seems to be sending the whole concept up, as when he falls into Hemingwayese to describe the hero cooking: "Newman could feel the swell of his biceps tightening his shirt as he bent his arm to move the mushrooms round the pan. His movement seemed precise to him. Controlled. Then he spooned a serving on to each plate with a spatula. He spilled none. *Good at what I do*, he thought." Later, however, it becomes sadly clear that we're not meant to laugh.

T. J. Binyon

Explanations of synopses

By Craig Brown

STANISLAW LEM :
Tales of Pirx the Pilot
206pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.
0 436 24422 5

Return from the Stars
247pp. Secker and Warburg. £6.95.
0 436 24415 2

Rumour from the land of the Science Fiction writers has it that they only write "proper" books to gain the greater critical attention they feel is due to their SF works. Stanislaw Lem's last book, *A Perfect Vacuum*, was well outside science fiction, ingenious and mesmeric. Critical essays about non-existent books, the collection hurled the reader from fascination to doubts about the worthiness of art and back again. If this was merely a gesture to the critics, one keenly anticipated his "real" work.

Alas, *Tales of Pirx the Pilot* could have been written by someone else, so lacking is it in interest of any sort. The first few pages of these short stories with a shared hero bode well: Pirx is a young space cadet, full of hopes and dreams, surrounded by students more proficient than he is. The creation of such a hero suggests a certain parody of the genre—as Pirx finds himself bemused by the lists of astronomical jargon, so does the reader:

> Mission: vertical launch at half booster power. Ascent to ellipsis B.68. Correction to stable orbital path, with orbital period of four hours and twenty six minutes. Proceed to rendezvous with shuttlecraft vehicles of the JO.2 type. Probable zone of radar contact: sector III, satellite PAL, with possible deviation of six arc seconds. Establish radio contact for the purpose of manoeuvre coordination. The manoeuvre: escape orbit, at sixty degrees twenty four minutes nort latitude. . . .

And so on. But before long it becomes apparent that the reader is expected to be fully interested in these boring lists, because most of the conclusions depend upon their scrutiny and digestion.

The character of Pirx, in the opening passages so pleasantly unlikely, becomes annoyingly professional as the book develops and his vehicle and surrounding begin to reveal mechanical faults. This is less a sign of any grand scheme than of lazy writing. The verbal felicity of *A Perfect Vacuum* is nowhere to be found. Where once were sparks lie ashes.

Lem's second book to be published this year (though he wrote it in 1960) is a more unified and considered work. *Return From the Stars* is the chronicle of an astronaut who returns to earth after a mission lasting ten years, which in earth time is 127 years. The major change lies in the nature of humanity: the elements of risk and danger have been removed from both the environment and, by a process called "betrization", from the mind. Risk "does not exist any more. . . . A man cannot impress a woman with heroics, with reckless deeds, and yet literature, art, our whole culture for centuries was nourished by this current: love in the face of adversity".

The novel is the story of Bregg's struggle against the demon comfort. The ability to imagine murder, and therefore the ability to commit murder, has vanished, leaving a contended world served wholly by robots. When Lem's energy is channelled into forcing ideas together—juxtaposing love with violence, perfection with mediocrity—then his work is thrilling, but too often it is servicing obscure story-lines, names and explanations. *Return from the Stars* reads like one of those synopses for science fiction novels that Vonnegut's Kilgore Trout is always dropping into his reminiscences. Lem would do well to learn from Vonnegut that an idea is not a novel.

Ending yet again

By Katharine Worth

UBY COHN :
Just Play
Beckett's Theater
313pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £10.20.
0 691 06410 5

JAMES KNOWLSON and JOHN PILLING :
Frescoes of the Skull
292pp. Calder. £12.95.
0 7145 3643 1

FREDERICK BUSI :
The Transformations of Godot
343pp. University Press of Kentucky.
0 8131 1392 X

Books on Beckett pour out, and who can wonder when the oeuvre itself steadily expands—though in the contracted forms which might deceive one into thinking that "shrinks" is the word for the whole process? A new piece of fiction, *Company*, has lately appeared and Beckett himself, spare, concentrated and dynamic at seventy-four, has been in London directing Rick Cluchey's players in *Endgame*, providing yet another of those new views of earlier work which keep his critics on their toes. It seemed characteristic that after standing for hours during these rehearsals, when a break came and most people had gratefully collapsed, he alone was still on his feet, giving the same close attention to the admirers questioning him as he had given so meticulously to the actors. Stamina of the same order is needed on the critics' part to keep up with his extraordinary capacity for self-renewal.

It is certainly possessed by Ruby Cohn, doyenne of Beckett critics, who in her latest study, *Just Play*, takes time to run briskly over Beckett's entire theatrical oeuvre *before turning to the new material which presumably made her decide* to return to him once more after her last *Back to Beckett* (1973)—"to end yet again", as her author says. In the first part Cohn retreads familiar ground (some of which she covered more thoroughly in the earlier book) in a business-like style, with few pauses for reflection and some tantalizingly cryptic references. How exactly, one wonders, did Beckett's production of *Krapp's Last Tape* in Berlin "borrow" from the "spare rectangles" of the television play *Ghost Trio*? We may be able to imagine, but it would have helped to hear more.

Still, it is an abundance of such detail, often worked through more closely (as in the fine account of the German *Godot* in 1975) which gives the book its value. One can never have too much of Beckett's own sayings and they are liberally supplied here, from rich sources such as directors' notebooks and conversations with actors. Beckett's usual reticence about the interpretation of his plays drops away when he takes on the director's role. There is much illumination to be had by entering into the production work with him, observing for instance how he seeks to vary the tonal interest in Krapp's repeated "Ah well" (the phrase that almost became the play's title) or how he requires Winnie's voice to change from "many coloured" to "white" as she sinks further into the ground. The actors are given some vivid tips. Rudi Schmidt, playing Willie, is told that the character is "an old turtle, very much of the earth". Winnie, on the other hand, is a "weightless" being: her tragedy is all the more poignant because she is being devoured by this same earth in which Willie is at home. And a strange light falls on Pozzo and Lucky when Beckett notes that they exchange a "Hypno look" across the possessions to which they are both so irrevocably attached.

Ruby Cohn also has much of interest to say about the adaptations of the plays to different media. Beckett emerges as rather less of a purist than he used to be. He actually prefers the television version of *Not I*, though it has no Auditor—that silent figure whose gestures of helpless compassion modify the bleakness of the stage play—and though the camera view of Mouth as a writhing organism is so horrific and compelling that it distracts attention from what the words are saying. She has less to say about the radio and television plays, possibly because they are less accessible (she may not know of the new recordings of *Words and Music* and *Embers* made by the University of London Audio Visual Centre, with Patrick Magee and Elvi Hale). One needs live materials to hand when discussion centres on fine points like the balance between different kinds of sound, including music.

The newest material in the book comes from Cohn's fascinating store of unpublished Beckett notebooks and drafts. She prints here for the first time a scene from *Human Wishes*, the play Beckett attempted in the 1930s, summarizing and quoting interestingly from the notebooks in which his preliminary work was recorded. We are given intriguing glimpses of the aspiring playwright trying unsuccessfully to complete a play on Samuel Johnson and Mrs Thrale, his "Johnson fantasy" as he called it.

Brief though it is, the scene already has some of the Beckettian hallmarks. It opens with a silent tableau of three women, one knitting, one reading, one (the blind Mrs Williams) "meditating". The cat, Hodge, should be sleeping "if possible", a joke anticipating the request at the close of *That Time* for the old man's smile to be "toothless for preference". There are several such anticipations. The pattern of silences and stiffly rhythmical dialogue—his "impossible jargon", Beckett called it—points us on, as Cohn says, to *Come and Go*, another tiny (though complete) piece in which three women sit together, intricately linked by feelings about the past and revealing themselves in part through silence (and words unheard by the audience). Beckett seems to have been inspired in his view of Johnson's odd household by the Doctor's formidably succinct account of his friends' feelings: "Williams hates everybody. Levett hates Desmoulins and does not love Williams. Desmoulins hates them both. Poll loves none of them." The Beckettian Mrs Williams does not hate so much as tartly observe and analyse. She also muses on what lies behind the surface of the irritating personalities around her and on the difficulty of taking proper notice of people: "There is a notice of the mind and there is a notice of the heart. The first is nothing. And the heart is cold."

Given these promising starts, how disappointing that Beckett did not get to the core of the story "Johnson in love". It proved too much of a problem, though (as 200 closely written pages of notes testify) it was this problem that drew him to the Johnson/Thrale relationship in the first place. He begins with the utmost confidence. "What happened at interview impossible to say. I shall say it", then searches for clues in the documents, querying "Invention?" from time to time against Mrs Thrale's account of events. He sees her as fundamentally unsympathetic to the "complication of miseries" which afflicted Johnson, and it seems that a major theme would have been the contrast between Johnson's capacity for suffering and the lack of that faculty in Mrs Thrale. Probably Beckett understood well from his own experience how immunity from "the need to suffer" would appeal to the genius so painfully conscious of his loneliness. But alas, he could not find a language for Johnson, so abandoned the story.

There is nothing as unfamiliar as *Human Wishes* in *Frescoes of the Skull*, a study which focuses on the later fiction and drama, but again there are many piquant titbits. The commentator's task is shared, with James Knowlson taking the drama and making good use of archive material to enliven his account of the plays from *Krapp's Last Tape* onwards. In the intensely brief later plays the minutest textual change has interest, as he shows. Some of Beckett's revisions come from production experience, as with the nine steps of *Footfalls*, changed from seven to meet staging needs at the Royal Court. Some are late second thoughts, as again in *Footfalls* when a reference to the south door of the church was changed to north door, to fit better with the atmosphere Beckett wanted: "Everything is frost and night". Sometimes we see him suppressing what was explicit in early drafts: how hard to imagine a *Come and Go* in which we actually heard what the women whisper to each other; yet so it once was ("Three months of life . . . she thinks it is heartburn"). Beckett certainly emerges as his own best critic.

The later prose fiction is probably less well known than the plays and is in many ways more difficult: it calls for help from commentators. John Pilling supplies this, progressing steadily through the fiction from *Texts for Nothing* to the ends and odds of recent years. He enjoys the conundrum aspect of Beckett's fiction. No text can be too obscure for him: indeed he thinks *Text 2* suffers from being too plain and straightforward for the "murky latitudes" in which it is set. Pilling is a confident explicator, always ready to tell us why Beckett does this or that, though well aware of the elusiveness of the texts he discusses. He does much to explain the technique, which is his chief interest, by paying attention to so many short pieces; in the end the formidable ground must take on a more familiar look even to the inexperienced reader of Beckett. By the time this reader reaches *For to End Yet Again* he should feel more able to grasp the twists and turns of those slippery narrators who are continually testing their own existence and pursuing the tantalizingly withheld self through its many metamorphoses: "number one and his pale imitators". Pilling occasionally seems to lose his own way among them, when he attributes to Beckett the sayings of his fictitious characters. But for the most part he is very much at home in the labyrinth.

In *The Transformations of Godot* Frederick Busi concentrates on Beckett's play with names, which he calls his "onomastic technique". Struck by the "eerie duality" of Godot, he interprets it as a mode of self-reflection in which the absent Godot is really present, concealed within the characters. Didi and Gogo, themselves reflections of Estragon and Vladimir, encounter a further reflection — the dark aspect of the self — in the other pair, Pozzo and Lucky, so experiencing a rare and terrifying glimpse into their hidden nature. Gogo's is an intuitive response — it is he who associates Godot with Pozzo — and Didi is the one who arrives at conscious understanding.

This is not exactly new ground, but Busi goes further than most in pursuing the implications of the names. He points to assonantal connections between Didi and Lucky, Pozzo and Godot, to the suggestiveness of derivations, as in Estragon (concealed dragon and mandrake), and to a host of analogies with names and "transcendental affinities" in Cervantes, James Joyce and the Commedia dell'Arte. There certainly does seem to be a genealogy linking Don Quixote/Sancho Panza with Pierrot/Harlequin and Didi/Gogo/Pozzo/Lucky: to do with the struggle of dreamers against "the brutal weight of reality" and with the need to improvise and act out experience in order to see more clearly. The veil of self-deception is lifted, argues Busi, at such moments as those when Didi and Gogo act Pozzo and Lucky or when Didi looks into Lucky's hat or when all four collapse in a farcical heap and have difficulty in separating themselves. Joyce naturally comes into play at this point ("the soul of everybodyelses body rolled into its own sole self"). Busi also reminds us that half of Joyce's double act, Mutt and Jute, is described as "seemeth a dragon man" (link here with Estragon?) and that the phrase follows close to a sly allusion in the *Wake* to Beckett as "Bethicket".

We may feel that the argument is being pushed rather far when nominal associations result in Estragon's being seen as a "demonic" figure or when the tentacles stretch out into the apocryphal gospels to embrace other strange pairs such as Didymus Judas Thomas, the legendary twin of Jesus, who according to the Gospel of Thomas was sold into slavery in India by Jesus, in order to save souls, including his own. It is certainly true, as Busi admits, that these transmogrifications would not be perceived in the theatre and are indeed only dimly perceptible in the text. As he pursues his variants of Lucky, Gogo and the rest, there are times when we seem to be back in the old style of Beckett criticism, when critics enjoyed their symbol hunting without much regard for the theatrical — and human — qualities of the play.

Yet it is true that Vladimir and Estragon themselves toy continually with the "arcane religious imagery" which Busi finds in the play—they are preoccupied with the fate of that far-off pair, the thieves crucified with Christ, one saved, the other damned—and that there is unmistakable allusion to the terrible division in the appearance of Godot's messenger, who inevitably has a brother, well treated where he himself is badly treated. Salvation is what is sought and it may indeed be, as Busi suggests, that the proliferation of Christian detail and allusion finally creates an impression that the pair standing by the tree are seeking to re-enact the redemption of Adam by Christ. Didi does say, "All mankind is us, whether we like it or not" and Gogo says of Pozzo "He's all humanity". It is true too, that Gogo is at one time called Adam.

Whatever weight we give to Busi's findings in the play, allusions to Adam and mandrakes, dragons and twins from the Apocrypha, many people (especially if they have seen the profoundly moving German production) will feel that when Estragon and Vladimir are alone at last by the tree facing the prospects of going on, the whole world does as he suggests, seem to be mirrored there.

Ascending into the abyss

By Redmond O'Hanlon

GARY GEDDES :
Conrad's Later Novels
223pp. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. $15.95.
0 7735 0357 9

This book grew out of a seminar held "5,280 feet above sea-level, on the site of a U.S. Mint and the headquarters for NORAD":

> While a feathering of fresh snow settled on the slopes muffling all but the drone of the lifts, scholars and devotees of the work of Conrad gathered in the mammoth glass and concrete convention centre to hear three papers on the later novels, one on *Chance*, one on *The Rover*, and one on Conrad's fictional women.

Awful though this prospect must seem to other devotees of Conrad, Gary Geddes believes that "there was something appropriate, something that the author of *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent*, and *Under Western Eyes* would have appreciated—about the location of this seminar". The unease this misapprehension produces is justified. Despite his well-intentioned "determination to challenge the prevailing opinion of Conrad's artistic growth so neatly and incorrectly summarized in the phrase, 'achievement and decline'", Gary Geddes would damage Conrad's artistic reputation, if he could.

"After the steep ascent of the great central novels", we are told, "few readers have been able or willing to bring their full critical attention to bear on all of the novels of the later period. Efforts to scale those final peaks—*Chance*, *Victory*, *The Shadow Line*, *The Arrow of Gold*, *The Rescue*, and *The Rover*—are too often characterized, ironically, by the very exhaustion and failure of critical nerve that has been attributed by his critics to the later Conrad." Conrad himself had much to say about men who attempt to scale self-imagined mountains into sunsets of heroism when they are in fact trudging into an abyss. In his own reading he preferred to be shown new fields of interest or to obtain fresh perspectives from unassuming travels and voyages, from the tentative conclusions of contemporary scientists, from some quietly and laboriously assembled Silbury Hill of real scholarship.

The gathering critical admiration, generated by Conrad's continuous major work from "*The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, a Tale of the Forecastle" in the *New Review* of 1897 to "*Under Western Eyes*; a Novel" in the *English Review* of 1910 swept him to popular success in 1912. The transition just happened to coincide with the publication of "*Chance*; a Tale of Two Parts" in the *New York Herald*; as Galsworthy remembered in *Castles in Spain and Other Screeds* in 1927, "*Chance* . . . an indifferent Conrad—at last brought him fortune. From that year on to the end his books sold well." Yet, Galsworthy continues (and Douglas Hewitt, Thomas Moser, Albert Guerard, Bernard Meyer, Frederick Karl and common sense concur) "with the exception of *The Shadow Line* and some parts of *Victory*, none of his work in that late period was up to his own exalted mark . . . it does disservice to Conrad's memory to be indiscriminate in praise of his work."

Gary Geddes disagrees: "the same author who dropped his pen and rose from his writing table after the arduous task of composing *Under Western Eyes* sat down again at that table and took up his pen—probably the same pen—to complete work on *Chance*, first of the so-called later novels". But this biographical fancy is contradicted by biographical facts. Conrad simply was not the same. A poignant little note from Jessie Conrad to David Meldrum of February 6, 1910, describes the psychological aftermath of Conrad's succession of masterpieces: "The novel is finished but the penalaty [sic] has to be paid. Months of nervous strain have ended in a complete mental breakdown . . . There is the MS complete but uncorrected . . . . It lays on a table at the foot of the bed and he lives mixed up in the scenes and holds converse with the characters."

As Edward Garnett had written as early as 1898 to another of the novelist's close friends, Cunninghame-Graham, Conrad was "a very delicate instrument—and delicate instruments are easily broken". From now on, as Conrad admitted to William Rothenstein in 1913, he would be half engaged in "keeping a tight hand on myself for fear my nerves go to pieces", and the last time that Rothenstein himself saw him "his condition alarmed me . . . nervous, irritable . . . exhausted . . . one so highly strung". H. R. Lenormand, who met him in Corsica, remembered him torn by "The only really tragic cry that a writer may utter: 'I can no longer work!' sounded almost daily in his conversation. Spasms of anxiety shook his composure."

Gary Geddes assures us that *Chance*, the first work he wrote in these grim times, is a great study of "the nitty-gritty of human communication" and that much of its interest lies in "the use of a wide range of English idiom and colloquial expression". Conrad would have been embarrassed by such a bewildered line of defence. He was well aware of its real value: "*Chance* had a tremendous press" he wrote to Garnett in 1912. "How I would have felt about it ten or eight years ago I can't say. Now I can't even pretend I am elated."

Geddes makes some sensible remarks about *The Shadow Line* which is almost vintage work—perhaps because Conrad felt revitalized by his recent visit to Poland and by the bridge he was temporarily enabled to make with his past. But of *The Arrow of Gold* Geddes tells us, "Remarkably, Conrad is exploring that strange No Man's Land between the sequential literary arts and the spatial visual arts." Conrad knew better. He wrote to the Sandersons in 1917: "You can imagine what sort of stuff that is. No colour, no relief, no tonality; the thinnest possible squeaky bubble. And when I've finished with it, I shall go out and sell it in a market place for 20 times the money I had for the *Nigger*, 30 times the money I had for the *Mirror of the Sea*."

Pidgin and Creole Languages (157pp. Cambridge University Press. £12. 0 521 22789 5) is a collection of essays by Hugo Schuchardt, edited and translated by Glenn G. Gilbert. It contains essays on Melanesian English, Indo-English, The Lingua Franca, the Language of the Saramacca Negroes in Surinam and Notes on the English of American Indians: Cheyenne, Kiowa, Pawnee, Pueblo, Sioux, and Wyandot. Examples are given of different pidgins; in Melanesian "Him fellow all same man-a-bush" means "They were fools", "Me no look him" means "I didn't see him".